



**Herbert Basedow on Buxton, a riding camel, near present-day Granite Downs station, South Australia 1903**

photograph by Alfred Treloar using Basedow's camera  
reproduced from film negative copied from original print

# Introduction

My relationship with Herbert Basedow has been a long one. I first came across his photographs in 1979, shortly after I joined the Australian Institute of Anatomy in Canberra. Sitting in the corner of my office was a filing cabinet storing hundreds of prints mounted on thin sheets of cardboard. Most were labelled as having been taken by 'H. Basedow'. In an old-style bookcase just outside my door I found negatives of the prints stored in paper envelopes in specially made wooden boxes and many more still in their original negative boxes. With them were hundreds of glass lantern slides in old cigar boxes.

I was fascinated by the photographs. There were images of Aboriginal people hunting, preparing food and performing ceremonies, as well as portraits, group photographs and images of rock art. Others were of outback stations, landscapes and rock formations, and trees blazed by early explorers. One group of photographs showed non-Indigenous people with a range of vehicles, mainly buggies, but also cars and camel trains. I was intrigued. Who was H Basedow and what did this amazing collection of photographs represent?

As I delved deeper, I began to build a detailed picture of Herbert Basedow, who is better known for his brief stint as Chief Medical Inspector and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, a position he held for less than four months in 1911, than any other parts of his life — and his was a life of many parts. He was a major collector of botanical specimens,

for example, and he discovered several new species of plants, some of which bear his name. A qualified medical doctor, he pursued many other fields of scientific knowledge, including geology, zoology and anthropology, an area of study in its infancy at the time. Basedow could be described as Australia's first 'home-grown' professional anthropologist.

But it was Basedow, the photographer, who really intrigued me. Most of the photographs derive from his many expeditions into central and northern Australia in the first decades of the twentieth century. It was on these journeys that he obtained the material on which his research was based, his photographs were taken, and his collections of Aboriginal artefacts and geological and natural history specimens were made. The reasons for the expeditions were many, but most were to investigate mineral prospects. Some were government-funded while others were private ventures, either by mining syndicates or companies, or by wealthy individuals. On some of the expeditions Basedow was an invited participant but on others, particularly later in his career, he was expedition leader.

The Basedow collection, which comprised Aboriginal artefacts as well as photographs, arrived at the Institute in 1934. Within six weeks of Basedow's death on 4 June 1933, his wife, Nell, and the Institute's director, Sir Colin MacKenzie, were corresponding about Basedow's papers. In her reply to Mackenzie's letter, Nell enquired whether the Institute was interested in purchasing the collection:

I had been thinking of writing to you about his collection of native weapons & curios. No doubt you are aware that Dr. Basedow's collection is the best privately owned in the Commonwealth, all personally collected from all over Australia during a period of over thirty years. Many of the articles once belonging to now extinct tribes, there are also some twenty skulls, & hundreds of photographs & various other things. As I will probably be selling the house, I was wondering if your Institute would buy the collection.<sup>1</sup>

The following year the Commonwealth Government purchased the artefacts and photographs for £500. Basedow's papers were not included, and they now reside at the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Basedow also collected geological and natural history specimens and it is thought he handed these over to institutions such as the South Australian Museum and University of Adelaide, soon after returning from his various expeditions.

Piecing together the clues to Basedow's life — and the photographs in the Institute's collection — was a painstaking process. The documentation of the photographs was limited and in many cases did not include anything more than Basedow's name. The prints mounted on card were mostly of Aboriginal people but there were also some of non-Indigenous subjects. As I better understood Basedow's work it became apparent that, apart from a small group of family photographs, the photographs were all related to his expeditions. This insight had been partly masked because the prints had been arranged by subject. When I decided to reorganise the photographs by expedition, it was a major breakthrough, for now the images were

arranged by place and time, and related photographs could be grouped together, even if they showed different subjects.

Given the dearth of documentation, this was no easy task. As I became more familiar with the photographs, trends became apparent. The same people and vehicles, for example, featured in a range of photographs. Also, Basedow had published many of the images and from these I had a base group for reference. The Institute had some of Basedow's publications and I began to locate others. He published widely, in anthropology in particular, but also geology and, early in his career, zoology, and photographs were included in most of his publications. I also consulted his papers at the Mitchell Library in Sydney and books of newspaper cuttings relating to Basedow at the State Library of South Australia.

During this research I discovered more photographs that could be attributed to particular expeditions among the negatives and slides that had not been printed. The Institute had its own dark room, so I began to make prints of photographs that had not been printed.

Over the next few years I continued to build a profile of this fascinating man. At the Mitchell Library, which holds most of Basedow's papers, I trawled through Basedow's prints, some loose and some in albums, gleaning what information I could to assist in documenting the photographs. I soon noticed inconsistencies in the labelling of some of the prints in the library and that the documentation contained errors. To compound the problem, the Institute had borrowed Basedow's papers from the library in the 1960s and had incorporated these inaccuracies



**Expedition vehicles, Victoria  
River district, Northern  
Territory 1922**

reproduced from glass plate negative

onto the records. So the task of improving the documentation now included working out what information was correct and what was not. The errors included incorrect dates and placements; in others it was the subject of the photograph. Unfortunately, some of these mistakes found their way into Basedow's second book, *Knights of the Boomerang*, published two years after his death.<sup>2</sup>

Once Basedow's publications and papers had been consulted, there were still many photographs that remained undocumented. It was now time for some lateral thinking. I noticed that some of the negatives were glass and some were film, and that they came in many sizes. This reflected Basedow's use of different cameras at different times, and that sometimes he took more than one camera on an expedition. Eventually, I worked out which negatives related to which expedition. Occasionally a negative form was specific

to one expedition while some were used on several different trips. This is where knowledge of who the people were in the images or the landscapes depicted proved useful. For example, the square format film negative was used on four expeditions between 1903 and 1926; two in central Australia and two in the far north. In each case the personnel and modes of transport were different, as was the nature of the country between the two regions. Once the expedition was determined, at the very least this provided a year and approximate location of where the photographs were taken.

When the Institute closed in the mid-1980s, its collection of Basedow's photographs became part of the National Historical Collection, housed at the National Museum of Australia. I also transferred to the Museum and continued to work intermittently on the Basedow collection, as priorities permitted. More

recently, it has been possible to again spend time on the photographs. Together with Museum volunteer Edwin Ride, whose expertise in working with historical photographs has been invaluable, I have been able to further document Basedow's photographs.

Given that the collection comprises more than 2000 images, selecting the photographs for this book and the exhibition was a challenge. Of course, the selection needed to be representative of Basedow's expedition activities, the people and places he encountered and his academic interests. Some were obvious choices, like the portrait of Kai Kai, a Western Arrernte man, that captures the dignity of the old man so well (see page 132); another, which shows the buggy from the 1920 expedition being hauled by four camels up a sandhill provides a powerful insight into the difficulties of travelling over trackless country (see opposite), and a set of four photographs of stock work on Innamincka station are full of action and danger (see page 109). An image taken at a glacial site is representative of Basedow's geological activities (see page 20). Given that Aboriginal cultures were Basedow's main academic interest, there is a strong Aboriginal presence. But they are not all ethnographic images; many are portraits reflecting the individuality of the subjects.

In some cases the final selection was an objective one where one image told a particular story better than others, and sometimes a special image won out. One of my personal favourites shows a group of about 24 Aboriginal people seated on the ground, men and boys in front and women behind, in a place north-west of Uluru (see page 187). Taken in 1926, it is not, technically speaking, one of Basedow's best photographs. It is marred by sun flares and is a bit

washed out but, at the same time, it reflects the dignity of people living their way in their own country.

Basedow's photographs are a significant window into a different time. He was a capable and dedicated photographer who produced many wonderful images that show ways of life that have long gone, and landscapes and places that have since changed and others that have remained unchanged. Some are photographic gems, capturing reflections on a central Australian waterhole or waterlilies in an Arnhem Land billabong; others provide important documentary records, such as the blazes marked on trees by explorers, which have since disappeared. Still others tell the stories of Basedow's many expeditions — the people, their modes of transport and the carrying out of everyday activities, such as hanging out the washing, replenishing water drums at a waterhole and preparing breakfast on the campfire.

Since his premature death in 1933 at the age of 51, Basedow has all but faded into obscurity. Little information is available about him beyond his entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* or his collections of artefacts and photographs. His publications are only occasionally cited yet aspects of his anthropological work, such as information gathered around Darwin, are essential to any research in this area.

Basedow left behind a significant legacy. In addition to his photographs, his published works are important sources of information, and his collections of Aboriginal artefacts and geological, plant and animal specimens are large and varied. *A Different Time: The Expedition Photographs of Herbert Basedow 1903–1928* gives Basedow some of the recognition he has long been due.





Nell Basedow, Frank Feast (driving) and Arrerika during the third medical relief expedition, central Australia 1920  
reproduced from glass plate negative

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Nell Basedow to Colin MacKenzie, 22 July 1933, National Archives of Australia, Series A2645 50/2/1. Presumably it was MacKenzie who underlined the section in this passage.
- 2 For example, different photographs of the same Aboriginal man were published in *The Australian Aboriginal*, Basedow's first book, and *Knights of the Boomerang*. In the former he is said to be a Wardaman man, which we can assume to be correct given that Basedow was involved in its publication. In *Knights of the Boomerang* he is said to be a Warramunga man. In 'Manipulation of photographs: A case study', *COMA: Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists*, vol. 14, 1984, 2–20, I corrected many of these errors (corrections in *COMA*, vol. 15, 1984, 25).

## Basedow the man

- 1 Ian Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Martin Peter Friedrich (1829–1902)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070205b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070205b.htm).
- 2 Some of his studies were undertaken at the South Australian School of Mines and Industries (now the Institute of Technology), where his brother Erwin (1875–1939) also studied.
- 3 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 May 1900.
- 4 *Register*, 19 September 1911; Robert Lucas to Basedow, 15 November 1901; SLSA, PRG 324, vol 1.
- 5 *Prince Alfred College Chronicle*, 8 March 1895.
- 6 *Journal*, 19 April 1919. His Cape Barren geese bred 'regularly' and by 1921 he had reared 36 birds.
- 7 See 'Basedow the scientist', p. 18.
- 8 This was a high-level visit that involved Basedow in a lot of organisational matters for a period of about two months. An extensive program was organised for the nine-day visit, including receptions, on-board tours, balls, dinners and excursions for the sailors.
- 9 Donald Mackay, 'The Mackay Exploring Expedition, Central Australia, 1926', *Geographical Journal*, 1929, 258–64.
- 10 Herbert Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XV, 1915, 57–242 (p. 66). Basedow also recounted another tale of

his early unease with his strange surroundings. On the night of 13 June 1903, the party had been so full of apprehension regarding the natives in the neighbourhood that they had extinguished their fire and loosed a volley of shots at a tree stump they mistook for an Aboriginal scout (ibid., p. 139).

- 11 He particularly looked at stones suitable for building materials as well as certain minerals like clays, gypsum and lignite. Herbert Basedow, *Report on Recent Development in Economic Geology*, Special Intelligence Bulletin No. 17, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1910 [p. 5].
- 12 Baldwin Spencer regarded Basedow's qualifications with 'contempt' (DJ Mulvaney & JH Calaby, *'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer 1860–1929 A Biography*, University of Melbourne Press, Carlton, 1985, p. 276), while South Australian anatomist F Wood Jones described Basedow's credentials as an 'impudent parade of degrees, real or assumed; and knowledge, borrowed, stolen or feigned' (quoted in Mulvaney & Calaby, p. 276). Spencer's disapproval of Basedow seems to have developed over time, as he and EC Stirling made 'valuable criticisms and suggestions on various points' of the first of Basedow's 'Anthropological notes' ('Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51 (p. 47)). Stirling, but not Spencer, provided 'kind assistance' three years later (Herbert Basedow, 'Anthropological notes on the western coastal tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXXI, 1907, 1–62 (p. 59). Regarding Wood Jones's charge of plagiarism, at worst, Basedow could be accused, on occasion, of not sufficiently or appropriately acknowledging the work of others when he should have, excusing himself for not doing so: 'for the simple reason that, had I started looking up all necessary references, the volume might never have been completed. My time at headquarters has been so limited during the last fifteen years that, in the absence of a library near at hand, it was impossible for me to adopt any other method than to write up my observations at first-hand and run the risk of a certain amount of trespass. Nevertheless, I trust that the authors so affected will realize that there was no slight intended and will treat my transgression in the spirit of independent corroboration' (Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, p xii).
- 13 He used the same titles in 'Diseases of the Australian Aborigines' in

- 1932 (*Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. XXXV, no. 12, 177–85; vol. XXXV, no. 13, 193–8; vol. XXXV no. 14, 210–13; 1 August, 229–33; 15 August, 247–50 and vol. XXXV, no. 18, 274–8).
- 14 *South Australian Government Gazette*, 11 August 1910, p. 290.
- 15 In the *South Australian Government Gazette* of 1 December, Basedow's Christian name was given as 'Hubert'. This was corrected in the following *Gazette* (8 December 1910, p. 1184).
- 16 *Express*, 25 January 1910.
- 17 Heidi Zogbaum, 'Herbert Basedow and the removal of Aboriginal children of mixed descent from their families', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 121, 2003, 122–38.
- 18 *ibid.* (p. 132). In Neville's view the 'full-blood' was doomed to extinction, while the 'half-castes', if cross-bred with whites, would inevitably produce whiter children, to the point where they would reach the standard of white Australians.
- 19 *ibid.* (p. 123).
- 20 Basedow met the South Australian Commissioner of Public Works on 3 June 1914 to discuss the matter and followed up the meeting with a letter the following day (SLSA, PRG 324, Item 2).
- 21 In 1929, for example, when he was president of the Aborigines' Protection League, he made a public appeal for fruit to send to Hermannsburg Mission in the Northern Territory to supplement meagre rations and, according to one newspaper, 'so that the blacks may not die of scurvy' (*Bunyip*, 30 August 1929).
- 22 *Register*, 7 May 1919.
- 23 *Critic*, 14 May 1919.
- 24 These were the only expeditions on which Nell accompanied her husband. Sometimes while her husband was away, she travelled overseas. On one trip in 1929 she visited Japan, China, Java and Singapore (see Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story: A German South Australian Heritage*, The Author, Adelaide, 1990, p. 125).
- 25 The reports included itineraries, a list of personnel, information on the nature of the country travelled, climate, geographical features, background information on the Aboriginal groups encountered including broad reasons for health problems, lists of individuals examined, diseases encountered and concluding remarks.
- 26 Herbert Basedow, 'Report upon the third medical relief expedition among the aborigines of South Australia', State Records of South Australia, GRG 23/1, 1921, 330, p. 30.
- 27 Herbert Basedow, 'Relic of the lost Tasmanian race: Obituary notice of Mary Seymour', *Man*, 14, 1914, 161–2.
- 28 Quoted in Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story*, p. 147.
- 29 Facsimile in *ibid.*, p. 146.
- 30 *ibid.* Bernard Basedow says the girls were treated 'extremely well, despite the fact that some people felt they were only servants'. A photograph in Adelaide's *Register* newspaper (8 January 1929) shows them serving Basedow with refreshments; the caption is headed 'Aboriginal girls as servants in Adelaide'. Other photographs in Basedow's collection show Tjikanna and Unndela with Nell at the zoo and with family pets and an unknown toddler. When Basedow died in 1933 both Tjikanna and

- Unndela 'deeply mourned the untimely death of Dr. Basedow' (*ibid.*, p. 147). Nell wanted to return the girls to the Northern Territory but Herbert's three sisters 'took them over and befriended them, in deference to their brother', creating a rift that led to Nell moving overseas for about 20 years (*ibid.*, p. 145).
- 31 *Register*, 12 August 1914.
- 32 Basedow to Richard L Butler, 26 August 1927, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4; Secretary for Lands to Basedow, 16 September 1927, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4.
- 33 Brown to Basedow, 28 March 1911, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 2.
- 34 S Roy Burston, Mervyn J Holmes, JT Beckett & JH Kelly to Basedow, 24 August 1911, NAA: Series A1 1912/2149.
- 35 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. vii.
- 36 *ibid.*, p. ix.
- 37 *Advertiser*, 28 February 1925.
- 38 Sir Arthur Keith to Basedow, 6 April 1925, SLSA, 572.994b.
- 39 *The Times*, literary supplement, 17 September 1925. This review strongly reads as having been written by an anthropologist familiar with Aboriginal cultures and the literature that had been written on the subject. Nevertheless, the reviewer goes on to acknowledge that the book 'has given us much, and we must be grateful to him for it; it is a compliment rather than a reproach to him that we wish he had given us much more'.
- 40 This reputation was acknowledged when Basedow was asked to write the contribution 'How should the visiting scientist approach the primitive Australian Aboriginal?' for a series entitled *Practical Hints to Scientific Travellers*, published in The Hague, 1926.
- 41 Both T Werner Laurie Ltd, and Thornton Butterworth Ltd, London-based publishers, approached Basedow.
- 42 Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Herbert (1881–1933)', [www.adb.online.cdu.au/biogs/AO70204b.htm](http://www.adb.online.cdu.au/biogs/AO70204b.htm). Basedow had stood unsuccessfully in 1924.
- 43 Unreferenced newspaper item, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4.
- 44 Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Herbert'.
- 45 *Mail*, 13 August 1927.
- 46 'Certificate of discharge', SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 47 Unreferenced newspaper article, SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 48 Unreferenced newspaper article, SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 49 *Leader*, 8 June 1933.

## Basedow the scientist

- 1 Although he did not publish in botany, he produced published work in geology and zoology.
- 2 Herbert Basedow, 'On the occurrence of Miocene limestones at Edithburgh, and their stratigraphical relationship to the Eocene of Wool Bay, with description of a new species by Professor R. Tate', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXV, 1901, 145–8.
- 3 *ibid.*, (p. 148).
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Herbert Basedow, 'Descriptions of new species of fossil mollusca



- from the Miocene limestone near Edithburgh (including notes by the late Professor Ralph Tate)', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVI, 1902, 130–2.
- 6 Herbert Basedow, 'On Naticoid genera Lamellaria and Caledoniella from South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 181–6; Herbert Basedow & Charles Hedley, 'South Australian Nudibranchs, and an enumeration of the known Australian species', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 134–60.
  - 7 These papers described, for example, 'new species of Orthoptera' (JGO Tepper, 'Descriptions of some new species of Orthoptera from north-western South Australia — No. 1', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 162–7); 'the Mollusca' (Charles Hedley, 'Report on the Mollusca collected by Mr. Herbert Basedow on the South Australian Government North-West Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 161–5); and 'insects including new species of Mantidae and Phasmidae' (JGO Tepper, 'Insects collected in the north-western region of South Australia proper by H. Basedow; with descriptions of new species of Mantidae and Phasmidae — No. 2', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 237–45). In his 1904 paper, Tepper named a new species of cockroach *Periplaneta* (now *Ataxigamia*) *basedowi* after Basedow, the specimen being one of a swarm attracted by the light of the expedition campfire at Hector Pass in the Mann Ranges.
  - 8 Basedow was, however, adept at the complex science of taxonomy and, as the following excerpt from his diary of the 1928 expedition to Arnhem Land shows, he was familiar with the characteristics to look for in identifying known species and recognising new ones: 'About these exposures a species of pandanus I have not seen before. Grows on the dry surfaces of sandstone with roots like a mangrove. The whole plant is peculiarly branched and in mature specimens reminds one of araucaria. Leaves very much smaller and less jagged than other species. Fruits quite distinct. From 15–25 feet. 2 Photographs and specimens' (Diary, 5 June 1928, Mitchell Library, MSS Set 161/5, Item 19). The pandanus was indeed a new species. Basedow submitted specimens of the plant to Kew Gardens in England and it was later named *Pandanus basedowii* (see CH Wright, '*Pandanus basedowii*', *Kew Bulletin*, 1930, 158).
  - 9 See Robert Burn, 'Notes on a collection of nudibranchia (Gastropoda: Dorididae and Dendrodorididae) from South Australia with remarks on the species of Basedow and Hedley, 1905', *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria*, vol. 25, 1962, 149–71; Seaslugforum, www.seaslugforum.net. The other specimen mistaken for a new species by Basedow and Hedley was in fact a juvenile form of a previously described species. One retains the name they assigned it (*Halgerda graphica*). The specimen collected by Basedow remains the paratype for this species, or one of the specimens against which future scientific determinations should be made.
  - 10 As an undergraduate student at the University of Adelaide Basedow undertook research into Tertiary age deposits and fossils. In 1907 Basedow travelled to Germany to undertake postgraduate studies. His PhD thesis was an Australia-wide examination of the country's geology, submitted to the University of Breslau in 1908 with the title 'Beitrage zur Kenntnis der Geologie Australiens'. It was published with the same title the following year (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 1909, 306–79).
  - 11 This medal was awarded for the best original work in geology and in 1904 Sir Edgeworth David, Professor of Geology at the University of Sydney, was the examiner. There were only two candidates but David judged Basedow's contribution to be the more worthy of this significant honour, commenting: 'I have no hesitation in recommending that the medal be awarded to Mr. H. Basedow. His description of his geological explorations in the Musgrave and adjacent ranges and his detailed petrological description of the rocks is an interesting and useful contribution to Geological Science, and in every way worthy of the high distinction of the award of the Tate Memorial Medal' (David to CR Hodge, Registrar, University of Adelaide, 22 July 1904, University of Adelaide Archives, Series 200, No. 579/1904).
  - 12 Bernard O'Neil, *In Search of Mineral Wealth: The South Australian Geological Survey and Department of Mines to 1944*, Department of Mines and Energy Special Publication No. 2, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1982, p. 148.
  - 13 Herbert Basedow, *Catalogue of Minerals in the Technological Museum of the South Australian School of Mines and Industries*, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1907.
  - 14 He wrote reports on these, but the only resultant geological publications were the 'Extracts of reports' that appeared in six-monthly Mines Department printed reports.
  - 15 His mentor Tate and Howchin had been involved in a feud over glacial deposits, and Basedow continued the cause after Tate's death. Howchin had been studying these deposits since the late 1800s. Basedow and a colleague, JD Iliffe, another of Tate's students, presented a paper titled 'On the formation known as Glacial Till of Cambrian Age in South Australia', at the Royal Society of South Australia meeting of 4 April 1905. They suggested that a deposit at Blackwood was in fact not a glacial deposit, as claimed by Howchin, but was created by metamorphic forces. At the Society's meeting the following month, Howchin, supported by eminent geologist and Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson, stridently criticised Basedow and Iliffe (*Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 335). Basedow and Iliffe evidently were not deterred by the Royal Society's meeting for, toward the end of 1907, a brief resume of their paper was read on their behalf at a Geological Society meeting in England, again refuting Howchin's claims. Both sides had their supporters, but in the end the general consensus was that Howchin had presented a convincing case and he was later 'completely vindicated' (Jonathan Selby, 'Geo-giants of the past: Walter Howchin (1945–1937)', *Terra Nova*, vol. 3, no. 5, 1991, 568–9 (p. 569)).
  - 16 Herbert Basedow, 'The supposed oil-bearing areas of South Australia: Dr Wade's report critically reviewed', TA Leslie, Adelaide, 1915; Herbert Basedow, 'Oil (in) the south east: Comprehensive reply to Mr Ward' [Adelaide, 1917].
  - 17 A paper he published in 1916 was little more than notes 'copied straight from [his] field-book' from the 1905 government expedition to the north-west of the Northern Territory ('Physical geography and geology

- of the Western Rivers' district, Northern Territory of Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVI, 148–217 (p. 6)). Attached to his published journal of a 1916 expedition to the Kimberley was a précis of the geology he had recorded, supplemented with notes by Robert Etheridge jnr ('Narrative of an expedition of exploration in north-western Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVIII, 1918, 105–295). Basedow's other geological writings during this period were opinion pieces, particularly relating to petroleum in south-eastern South Australia, and short published notes and unpublished reports.
- 18 Undated advertisement, probably about 1923, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 3. Surviving reports demonstrate that his geological examinations after 1911 were undertaken in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and his home state.
  - 19 Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, p. ix.
  - 20 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. xii.
  - 21 The closest he came to this was in his 'Anthropological notes' and perhaps his 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island' ('Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51; 'Anthropological notes on the western coastal tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXXI, 1907, 1–62; 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island, North Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIII, 1913: 291–323).
  - 22 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. xiii. Some of the 'intimate' photographs Basedow referred to are, no doubt, of secret rituals.
  - 23 Herbert Basedow, 'Vergleichende Vokabularien der Aluridja- und Arrundta- Dialekte Zentral-Australiens', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 40, 1908, 207–28.
  - 24 Bullroarers are, among central Australian peoples, secret ceremonial objects, which women and children are not permitted to see.
  - 25 Herbert Basedow, 'Aboriginal rock carvings of great antiquity in South Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIV, 1914, 195–210 (pp. 198–203). In the absence of direct dating techniques he suggested the silica film covering the entire rock surface and geological forces that had caused rocks to split through engravings or break away from the bedrock, meant the engravings were of some antiquity (a theory since confirmed).
  - 26 Herbert Basedow, 'Diseases of the Australian Aborigines', *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. XXXV, no. 12, 177–85; vol. XXXV, no. 13, 193–8; vol. XXXV no. 14, 210–13; 1 August, 229–33; 15 August, 247–50 and vol. XXXV, no. 18, 274–8.
  - 27 Herbert Basedow, 'Report upon the First Medical Relief Expedition amongst the Aborigines of South Australia', 1920, South Australian Archives, GRG 23/1 1920 144, pp. 30–1.
  - 28 Basedow probably met Klaatsch at an Adelaide meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, when Klaatsch delivered a paper based on his research and travels through Australia from 1904 to 1906. Klaatsch was determined 'to attack the difficult problem of the origin of the Australian blacks, and of their importance in relation to the whole development of mankind' (Hermann Klaatsch, 'Some notes on scientific travel amongst the black population of tropical Australia in 1904, 1905, 1906', *Report of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, vol. XI, 1908, 577–92, (p. 577)). At that time he inclined to the theories of AW Howitt, who had postulated a now-submerged continent as the most probable origin of the Australian Aborigines, and the Asiatic race; however this opinion was to undergo revision and further development in later years. Klaatsch referred in his paper to work undertaken by Basedow: 'Before my arrival Mr. Herbert Basedow, that gifted young scientist, made a profound study of the customs and weapons of the tribes of Palmerston and of the Daly River' (p. 584).
  - 29 *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1928. See 'Basedow the man', p. 9, for a fuller discussion of Basedow's complex attitudes towards Aboriginal people.
  - 30 Basedow lecture quoted in the *Northern Territory Times*, 2 September 1922.
  - 31 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 58.
  - 32 See 'Basedow the man', p. 10 for a discussion of how recent commentators have accused Basedow's explanation of the close relationship between the two races as contributing to government policies separating part-Aboriginal children from their Aboriginal parents.
  - 33 *Bulletin*, 23 December 1926.
  - 34 Basedow's talent as an artist was evident by his early teens, as two watercolours reproduced in a family history attest (Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story: A German South Australian Heritage*, The Author, Adelaide, 1990, pp. 107, 108). These demonstrate an eye for balance and detail characteristic of Basedow's later drawings.
  - 35 Surviving maps from his 1903, 1905, 1916, 1919, 1920b, 1923, 1926 and 1928 expeditions demonstrate his competency in cartography and surveying.
  - 36 One was an examination of the cultural practices of circumcision and subincision ('The strange erotic ritual of Australian Aborigines', in R Burton (ed.), *Venus Oceanica*, New York, 1935, pp. 321–62). The other was his second book, *Knights of the Boomerang*, a popularised account of his travels and investigations into Aboriginal cultures (The Endeavour Press, Sydney, 1935). It has been suggested that *Knights* is 'less careful with both "facts" and interpretation' (RM Berndt & CH Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1981, p. 539). Although loose in its interpretation the book is helpful in developing an understanding of Basedow's travels as it is quite detailed in referring to places and people.
  - 37 Basedow was a member of the Royal Society of South Australia and the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch (now the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia). He was also a member of British and European Societies, including the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, sometimes by invitation. In 1910 he was 'asked by the Geographical Society of

Hamburg to accept an honorary corresponding fellowship' (unknown newspaper, 3 May 1910). In 1932, after he had lectured in Europe, the Vienna Anthropological Society made him an honorary member, 'in recognition of distinguished services rendered in the fields of anthropology and exploration' (*News*, 3 May 1932).

- 38 Ian Harmstorff, 'Basedow, Herbert (1881–1933)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070204b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070204b.htm).

## Basedow the photographer

- 1 Other negatives remained with Basedow's brothers and sisters and were acquired by the South Australian Museum after the last of his siblings, Hedwig, died in 1963. Another 28 were acquired by University of Sydney anthropologist NWG Macintosh and, after his death, were donated to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra by his widow.
- 2 As some form of identification existed for at least one image per roll, the order in which the rolls were exposed could be determined. Reference to Basedow's diary for the 1926 expedition, yet to be done, should enable most, if not all, of the remaining images to be documented.
- 3 Brenda L Croft, 'Laying ghosts to rest', in Judy Annear (ed.), *Portraits of Oceania*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000, p. 9.
- 4 Letter, Basedow to David, 13 February 1925, University of Sydney Archives, P11/32/5.
- 5 Herbert Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XV, 1915, 57–242 (p. 240).
- 6 Herbert Basedow, 'Narrative of an expedition of exploration in north-western Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVIII, 1918, 105–295 (p. 106).
- 7 An entry in the diary of 18-year-old Richard Grenfell Thomas, one of two assistants on the first medical relief expedition in 1919, reveals that he and Basedow were watching horses being branded on Innamincka station when Basedow took 'several snaps with the Reflex' (Richard Grenfell Thomas, Diary entry for 8 September 1919, private collection). This may have been the same camera referred to by Basedow's assistant Frank Feast in an interview about the third medical relief expedition of 1920. Feast mentioned that Basedow had a 'Press Graflex for close-ups of Aborigines' (Interview with Frank Feast, sound recording, 27 February 1986, Tape 8, Side B, National Museum of Australia). This camera took glass plate negatives identical to ones used on expeditions during the period 1919 to 1924. Basedow also used it to take family photographs. When Basedow went to London on a business trip at the end of 1931, he took a camera that used the same size of glass plate negative, but it was not the same camera as it had a different method for holding the negative in place, as indicated by marks left on the negatives themselves.
- 8 In the period 1905 to 1911 Basedow seems to have only used large half-plate glass negatives, which generally provided fine-quality images.

These were the largest of the negative types employed by Basedow.

Basedow was still using this type of camera until at least 1916 and possibly as late as 1924 when he was completing his major book, *The Australian Aboriginal*, published the following year.

- 9 Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition' (p. 77).
- 10 Donald Mackay, 'The Mackay Exploring Expedition, Central Australia', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 73, 1929, 258–64 (p. 264).
- 11 Herbert Basedow, 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island, North Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIII, 1913, 291–323.
- 12 Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition' (p. 113).
- 13 See Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, pp. 76–77, Plate XIII/1.
- 14 Herbert Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, Endeavour Press, Sydney, 1935, p. 165.
- 15 *ibid.* Perhaps Basedow was unaware that it was also common practice for the ceremonial design to be obliterated at the conclusion of festivities.
- 16 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, Plate XXXII.
- 17 Basedow was not alone in this intent. His better known contemporaries Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, for example, also went to lengths to ensure European materials did not appear in their photographs. See Nicolas Peterson, 'Visual knowledge: Spencer and Gillen's use of photography in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 1, 2006, 12–22 (p. 17).
- 18 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 58.
- 19 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, p. 22. It was not particularly uncommon for Aboriginal people to be asked to undress, partially or completely, to be photographed. The evidence for Basedow's actions in this respect comes largely from the photographs themselves, where clothing can be seen on the ground near the subject, or where trousers or blouses have clearly been lowered or partially lowered. Basedow was motivated in some instances by his anthropological and medical interests: Basedow took three photographs of a man in the Kimberley in 1916. He is not wearing a shirt and his trousers are partly lowered, just to the top region of his buttocks. It is fairly clear that the reason for the photographs is to record all of the man's cicatrices, which Basedow also documented in a notebook.
- 20 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, p. 23.
- 21 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, pp. 184–90.
- 22 Murray Garde & Apolline Kohen-Raimondo, 'Putting Herbert Basedow back in focus: the 1928 expedition to Arnhem Land', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 1, 2004, 26–36 (p. 35).
- 23 Peterson, 'Visual knowledge', p. 18.
- 24 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, pp. ix–x.
- 25 *Adelaide Chronicle*, 30 January 1904.
- 26 This was not the only time Basedow's photographs were treated in this way; in *The Australian Aboriginal*, photographs showing a naked woman and man also had pubic covers added (Plates XVI/1 and 2). Other photographs in the book had shadows further darkened to hide detail in the genital region. For reasons unknown, similar photographs

were left unmodified. There is an even more extreme example of image manipulation in which Basedow must have been complicit. In his 'Anthropological notes' of the 1903 expedition, one photograph shows three men holding spears in tandem with spear-throwers, while another man is sitting in the foreground (Basedow, 'Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51, Plate VIII/1). In the original photograph the expedition's male Aboriginal assistant, Arrerika, can also be seen, fully clothed. This would not have sat well with Basedow's intention of depicting traditional culture and, furthermore, Arrerika was not from the same cultural group as the other people shown.

- 27 The only other album of Basedow's known to exist depicts subjects of medical interest, and comprises photographs taken by Basedow and others.
- 28 See Paul S Taylor, Howard M Levin & Katherine Northrup (eds), *Dorothea Lange: Farm Security Administration Photographs, 1935–1939*, 2 vols, The Text-Fiche Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1980.