William Blandowski (1822-1878), the son of a Prussian military officer, was born in Gliwice, Upper Silesia. He served briefly in the Royal Prussian Cadets. He arrived in Australia in 1849 and travelled widely in New South Wales and South Australia. He took part in the early gold rushes and made a small fortune at the goldfields near Castlemaine. He was one of the founders of the Geological Society of Victoria in 1852 and in the following year he was attached to the field party of the government geologist. In 1854 he was the first officer appointed to the Museum of Natural History in Melbourne. As government zoologist, he made several excursions into rural areas and began compiling a checklist of the animals and birds of Victoria. In 1856-57 he led an expedition to investigate the natural history of the region at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers. Following his return to Melbourne, he submitted a report to the Philosophical Society of Victoria but never reported back for duty at the Museum. Accused of retaining specimens, drawings and journals for his own use, he left Australia in 1859 and sailed to Hamburg. He returned to Silesia and published some scientific papers on Australia.

The authorship of Australien in 142 Photographischen Abbildungen, published in 1862, is discussed by Harry Allen in an article in Australasian Historical Archaeology, vol. 24, 2006, pp 31-37. The cover page of the work identifies Blandowski as the author and the images are attributed either to Blandowski or Gustav Mützel. Blandowski was a competent artist and photographer, but the majority of sketches of Aboriginal life and natural history in the album were almost certainly the work of Gerard Krefft, who was his deputy on the 1857-57 expedition. Blandowski arranged the illustrations into groups, providing a narrative structure to the publication.
WILLIAM BLANDOWSKI

Reel M853


The album contains 142 miniature albumen prints, which are numbered and have captions in miniscule handwriting. Many of the illustrations are signed ‘GM60’ or ‘GM61’, referring to Gustav Mützel (1813-1893), a German artist who in 1860-61 reworked sketches that Blandowski brought back from Australia. Many also have plate numbers, which seem to refer to an encyclopaedia of Australian natural history, which Blandowski planned but did not complete. A few are signed ‘Redaway’, referring to the Melbourne printer James Redaway who produced etchings and engravings of Blandowski’s drawings.

Most of the photographs in the album in the Haddon Library have brief manuscript captions, but some are indecipherable or incomplete. The only other surviving copy, in the Stadtsbibliothek in Berlin, is bound with a printed pamphlet containing much lengthier captions and also a postscript written in German. An English translation of the captions and the postscript can be found in Harry Allen, ed. *William Blandowski’s illustrated encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010.

Photograph

1. Title device.
2. Origin of wind systems with the sun crossing the equator, by Blandowski.
3. Map: conjecture of vegetabilic, zoological and ethnographical zones in Australia. (Redaway)
4. Geological views in Victoria: Diogenes Monument looking south towards Mount Macedon. (Plate 1a)
7. Photograph of basalt columns, Mount Macedon.
8. Geological views in South Australia: crater of Mt Gambier. (Redaway)
11. Geology of Victoria: Granite Pattowatto. (plate 10)
12. Geological scenery of Australia: Dr Banton’s Telamiguling. (plate 11) (GM 60)
Geological views in South Australia: compressed strata near Morphett Valley.

Geological views in South Australia: west point of Section 478 16 miles S from Adelaide.

Geological scenes of Australia: Glen Osmond waterfall near Adelaide. (plate 17)

Vegetation of Victoria: high fern trees. (Redaway)

Eucalyptus robusta.

Baobab tree.

Scenery of Australia: Eucalyptus piperita.

Blandowski’s party on the march. (GM 61)

Scenery of Australia: Mondellimin near the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers. (plate 161)

Aborigines of Australia: Blandowski’s camp. [GM 61]

Aborigines of Australia: a campfire at night. (plate 137) (GM 61)

Aborigines of Australia: natives visiting Europeans. (plate 130)

Aborigines of Australia: Hinanamyn and Tinmayn.

Aborigines of Australia: figures of the Australian natives. (plate 129)

Aborigines of Australia: an old woman of the Compaspe (sic) and Murray R. junction. (GM 61)

Aborigines of Australia: married woman, age about 30, from Lake Albert, South Australia.

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Aborigines of Australia: fire making. (plate 183)

Aborigines of Australia: water collected in the desert. (plate 102) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: domestic life in the summer season in the lower Murray River. (plate 127) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: seed of panicum preparing for food. (plate 181) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: natives making a canoe on the Murray River. (GM 60)

Fishes living in the Murray River and its tributaries in Victoria. (figures 11-19)

Fishes living in the Murray River and its tributaries in Victoria. (figures 1-10)

Aborigines of Australia: fishermen at night. (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: fishing in the sea. (GM 61)

Aborigines of Australia: women fishing in a lagoon. (plate 134)

Aborigines of Australia: fishing. (plate 198) (GM 61)
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Aborigines of Australia: the natives shifting their encampment.

Birds of Australia: untitled. (plate 19)

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Aborigines of Australia; natives digging for Leipoa eggs. (plate 152) (GM 1860)

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Birds of Australia: bird eggs of Victoria. (plate 110)

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Aborigines of Australia: emu hunt. (plate 195) (GM 61)

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Aborigines of Australia: natives netting ducks, lower Murray River. (plate 148) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: natives netting ducks, lower Murray River. (plate 154)

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Mammalia of Australia: marsupial animal life of the mountains. (plate 114) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: wombat digging. (plate 132) (GM 60)

Aborigines of Australia: domestic life of the natives. (plate 131)

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Photograph of Gleiwitz, by Blandowski.