



CAS News April 2014

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Canberra Archaeological Society/ Centre for Archaeological Research- Public Lecture Series

Wednesday 16th April 2014

Haydon Allen Lecture Theatre (also known as The Tank), Building 23, ANU

Evidence of Increased Biomass Burning After the Extinction of Australian Megafauna

Professor Patrick De Deckker AM, FAA

There has been a long and heated debate in Australia about the timing and cause of the extinction of the Australian megafauna, which includes a variety of large marsupials, including the carnivorous marsupial

lion (*Thylacoleo*) and the giant flightless bird (*Genyornis*). The debate has concerned whether humans are the direct cause [through hunting], or an indirect cause [through burning of the landscape]. Or was it a shift of climate that engendered the disappearance of large animals, or a combination of any of these factors?

There is now widely accepted evidence that humans arrived in Australia between 54,000 to 45,000 years ago. The megafaunal extinction is widely considered to have occurred between 49,000 and 44,000 years ago, with no megafauna younger than that date, though some researchers dispute this chronology. This sequence suggests that the arrival of humans is the main driver for this extinction. In addition, the imposition of a human-controlled burning regime in Australia is suggested as the most likely cause of ecosystem change that affected the megafauna.

Together with a team of organic geochemists from NIOZ, we have studied a sediment core obtained from the sea floor at 865 m water depth offshore from Kangaroo Island, opposite the mouth of the River Murray. The sediments in the core originate from the Murray-Darling Basin and are mixed together with marine pelagic clays. From the core sediments we were able to reconstruct sea-surface temperature for the past 135,000 years as well as variations in the type of vegetation in the Murray Basin, estimated from changes in ratio of the carbon-13 and carbon-12 isotopes of organic compounds found in the core.

We noted the following: 1) Sea-surface temperature only varied by about 3°C during the period of megafaunal extinction and these changes are minor compared to the large changes (up to 10°C) over the full 135,000 year core record, indicating that the time of megafaunal extinction was not a time of major climate change; 2) prior to and during the megafaunal extinction, the percentage of C4 grasses averaged 70%, whereas AFTER the extinction, this value dropped to 35%, 3) the shift from C4 grass to C3 vegetation dominance coincides with an abrupt rise in the presence of Levoglucosan - an organic compound produced as a result of biomass burning. This demonstrates that increased fire coincided with the shift of vegetation (to more abundant C3 vegetation), immediately AFTER the megafaunal extinction. These findings clearly demonstrate that the megafaunal extinction event was not coincident with a major climate shift but immediately preceded a significant vegetation change.

Biography

Patrick De Deckker has worked at the ANU for over 30 years in his capacity of micro palaeontologist interested in Quaternary palaeoenvironments. He has examined records from large lakes and the open ocean and dealt with the taxonomy, ecology, palaeoecology of lacustrine and marine organisms. He has also looked at the geochemistry of microfossils, sedimentology and geomorphology.

Gorooyaroo Nature Reserve Debrief

On Sunday 16th March a group of about 30 keen fans of archaeology and history embarked on a day out in the sun to brush up on their field techniques. The day began with a search of the area and possibly fifty odd calls to Helen asking where to meet! Eventually Alister Bowen led the group to our first site: the ruins of Inglewood, encompassing a chimney, strewn bricks and some flooring. The event began at this spot with an introduction to basic mapping and then the group was divided into two: one was sent with Alistair to practice mapping at the Dungarvon site and learn some basic dumpy techniques. The other team did a similar walk and map scenario with ANU Lecturer in Australian Archaeology, Duncann Wright. It was interesting and a great day to learn some 'pro tips', even better was involvement from other lecturers, Postgrad students, undergrad students including some from UC, and CAS members in a great day of laughs and techniques!

Someone left behind a retractable tape – so if anyone is missing one, please let us know!

National Trust (ACT) Heritage Festival Events – 6-19 April

Saturday 5 April 2014 - 1.30pm-4.30pm



Don't miss this unique opportunity to visit three special examples of early Canberra housing. The tour includes an introductory talk, a guided walk of about 1 km over paths and grass, an inspection of each cottage and garden, with an explanatory handout on the history of each. Others will be seen along the way. The event includes a delicious afternoon tea provided by volunteers from the Baker Pre-school. **Venue:** 4th Ainslie Open Houses and Gardens

Yarralumla Nursery Open Day

Sunday 6 April 2014 10am-3pm



This heritage-listed nursery was part of a larger nursery and arboretum comprising Weston Park and Westbourne Woods. Join special tours through the nursery and enjoy displays, activities and refreshment in the park adjoining the nursery.

No booking required (gold coin donation entry).

CAS is also planning an information booth at the Nursery and needs volunteers for this event – please contact Helen on 0408 443 243 if you can stay for an hour or two, smile at people and encourage them to join the Society.

More National Trust (ACT) tours for which there will be a cost and you will need to book through the phone number or email below:

- A walk to Yankee Hat Indigenous Rock Art *Saturday 12 April 10am-3pm*
- Walking Tour of Magna Carta Place - ****National Trust of Australia ACT in partnership with the Magna Carta Committee of Australia**** *Saturday 21 April 2-3pm*
- Narrabundah Pre Fabs Walk *Sunday 13 April 1pm-4pm*
- ANU Classics Museum *Monday 14 April 1.30pm-4pm*
- Three Cornerstones Walking Tour of Oaks Estate and Robertsons' House, *Saturday 19 April 10.30am-1.15pm*

Bookings: 02 6230 0533 (9.30am-3pm Mon-Thurs) or email info@nationaltrustact.org.au

Inca and Ritual Ceremony

Tuesday 1st April 2014 – 12.45am

Lisa Solling, PhD Candidate in Archaeology, ANU, discusses the ritual landscape of the Inca, with a focus on human sacrifice.

Venue: Australian National Gallery Small Theatre

Price: Free

Hall School Museum Exhibition Launch

Saturday 12 April 10am

Exhibition Launch:

On Our Selections – District Life of the 19th Century

Typical Early Settler's Home



INVITATION: Friends of the Hall School Museum invite you to the launch of their exhibition to celebrate the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival by:

Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

WHERE: Hall School Museum, Victoria Street Hall. Easy parking. Disability access.

WHEN: Saturday 12th April 2014 at 10am (Exhibition open 10am to 4pm)

RSVP by 8 April 2014 to email: allwood3@hotmail.com or telephone: 0408 259 946

Gold Coin donations will assist Friends of the Hall School Museum.

This project was supported with funding from the ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program and the Village of Hall and District Progress Association Inc

museum.hall.act.au

Our exhibition aims to give you a glimpse of life as it was lived in the half century before Federation. Hard times and natural disasters notwithstanding, it was not all work and no play.

CANBERRA AND REGION
**HERITAGE
FESTIVAL**
JOURNEYS • 5-21 APRIL 2014

 **hall**SCHOOL MUSEUM
The Laurie Copping Heritage Centre

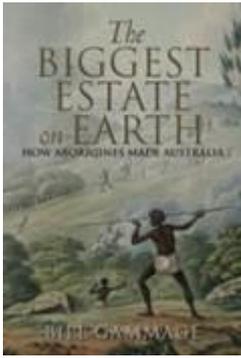
 **hall**
VHOPA

National Trust Speaker's night - "The Biggest Estate on Earth:

How Aborigines made Australia"

Wednesday 16 July 2014, 5.30pm – 7.00pm

National Archives of Australia



Professor Bill Gammage AM will talk about his remarkable book which questions the myth that pre-settlement Australia was an 'untamed wilderness'. His ground-breaking research on the extraordinarily complex system of land management of Aboriginal people rewrites the history of Australia, with huge implications for us today.

Cost: \$10.00 for National Trust members and guests. Drinks and nibbles included.

Please RSVP by 10 July 2014: call 02 6230 0533 or email info@nationaltrustact.org.au



LAKE MUNGO AND THE MURRAY

26 – 30 JULY 2014

Experience 40,000 years of human history in Australia.

This tour will depart from Canberra by air-conditioned coach, overnight in Griffith and then proceed on to Mildura where we have an afternoon tour and a visit to Old Mildura Station Homestead and Lock 11 on the Murray. The next day the coach will drive to the World Heritage listed Lake Mungo National Park where an experienced guide will explain the deep history of the area and its long human experience. The coach will return to our accommodation in Mildura. The following day the coach will depart Mildura for an overnight stay in Corowa. Leaving Corowa we head back to Canberra via Chiltern and a visit to Lake View House significant for its association with the distinguished Australian Author, Henry Handel Richardson (pseudonym for Ethel Richardson). Dr Peter Dowling, archaeologist, will accompany the tour.

Cost: \$1,265.00 p/p twin share; Single supplement \$185.00

Bookings and payment to be made through Potter Travel, Queanbeyan (02) 6297 858
tours@pottertravel.com.au