

CAS News November 2015

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Canberra Archaeological Society Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Archaeological Society will be held on Wednesday 18th November 2015 at the Manning Clark Centre, Theatre 6, Bldg 26A, Union Court, ANU prior to the public lecture

The time has come again for the AGM of CAS. At the meeting the Society's audited financial statements will be presented at the meeting.

All positions on the Committee shall be declared vacant and nominations are invited for election to the following positions: President, Vice President (2), Secretary, Treasurer and Committee (up to 6).

Members are reminded that persons must be financial members of the Society before they may vote at the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you can return the attached proxy form by email to Iain.Johnston@anu.edu.au. Receipt from your personal email address will be accepted as a signature.

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

Wednesday 18th of November 2015

6.30pm for refreshments, 7.00pm the lecture

Manning Clark Centre, Theatre 6, Bldg 26A, Union Court, ANU

Stuart Hawkins

Archaeology and Human Behavioural Ecology in Vanuatu

Human behavioural ecology (HBE) has become a popular theoretical perspective over the last few decades to explain how culture evolves through the archaeological record. At its foundation is the premise that humans act in ways to maximize their reproductive fitness. After 40 years of application in archaeology it has become more nuanced to include a range of models from optimal foraging and niche construction and/or social models such as costly signalling theory. These models have the power to develop predictions for human behaviour, which can typically be tested using multiple proxy data sets. This framework was applied to the complex Lapita site of Teouma on Efate Island in the Vanuatu Archipelago, settled between ca. 3000-2500 BP. Teouma is the most data rich site in the Pacific with detailed recordings of the earliest cemetery in the Pacific where elaborate mortuary practices were practiced. Clearly defined spatio-temporal divisions and abundant vertebrate remains were identified and recorded. Zooarchaeological data, including prey diversity, relative abundance, skeletal element representation, demographic reconstruction, and changes in butchery intensity, were used to test HBE model predictions. The findings indicate that the Lapita people at Teouma made optimal decisions to maximize net returns of protein, while also utilizing animals to signal social status through displays of wealth and power. In this way Lapita settlers improved the chances of economic and cultural adaptation to the local environment and the development of a sustained and permanent colony at Teouma. Unfortunately these unrestrained behaviours were to have a lasting impact on the local terrestrial ecology through forest clearance, the introduction of invasive mammals, and human predation on naïve fauna. The consequence of rapid niche construction was a profound evolution of Lapita economy and culture.

Book Release

The Australian Archaeologist's Book of Quotations

Edited by Mike Smith and Billy Griffiths

Australian archaeology has been involved in a great enterprise over the last sixty years, uncovering the deep past of a desert continent and the history of its first people. This book is a guide to the catchphrases of the discipline. It is a meditation on science and place, culture and politics, deep time and the Dreaming – and it is steeped in an appreciation of good writing and a well-turned phrase. Woven in amongst these quotations is the story of how, as a nation, we are coming to terms with ancient Australia.

The entries are drawn from letters and journals, histories and poems, newspapers and novels. Each has been chosen because it is a pithy summation of an issue. Combined, they map the development of the field and encourage a dialogue between science and the humanities. <http://publishing.monash.edu/books/aabq-9781922235749.html>

Excerpts from the book:

The discoverers, explorers and colonists of the three million square miles which are Australia, were its Aborigines. **John Mulvaney, 1969**

Perhaps we should call what the Aborigines did 'fire-stick farming'. **Rhys Jones, 1969**

...if we Aborigines cannot control our own heritage, what the hell can we control? **Rosalind Langford, 1983**

Upcoming Exhibitions

The 'Encounters' Exhibition at the National Museum of Australia

Early, rare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethnographic objects held in the British Museum will go on show in Australia for the first time, from 27 November 2015 at the National Museum of Australia. The exhibition is the climax of years of research and community engagement. The objects will be displayed with new objects from the Indigenous communities represented in the exhibition.

The exhibition is a collaborative project between the National Museum of Australia, the British Museum, the Australian National University and a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. Details are at: <http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/encounters>.

Australian Archaeological Association Conference Fremantle, Western Australia 2015

The AAA2015 Conference will be hosted by the University of Western Australia from the 2-4 December, 2015. The conference theme is 'On the Edge: The Archaeology of Adaptation and Transition'.

Australia is the most arid continent to have been occupied by modern humans with 70% of its landmass comprised of Drylands. These vast areas share boundaries with two of the World's great oceans as well as numerous adjoining bioregions on land. The conference theme aims to investigate how people have responded to a range of influences generated by living 'on the edge'. Such factors include environmental and social forces and we are interested in all time periods from first human arrival to European invasion and into the world today. Locating our enquiries at the intersection between Australia's deserts and surrounding landscapes/ seascapes will help us reflect on how people adapt and change in transitional zones.

Australian Academy of the Humanities Annual Symposium Intersection: Time, Materiality & the Humanities

26-27th of November 2015 at the University of Sydney

The Academy's 46th Annual Symposium will explore new frontiers in humanities research centred on intersections between objects and timescales. Scholars from across various disciplines will investigate the ways in which the material world is used, shaped and negotiated over timescales of vastly differing depths. Expanding beyond texts and visual media, materiality also encompasses memories, objects and landscapes. Histories that draw on this broader palette offer new means of envisioning the past, including novel conceptions about 'Deep Time' or 'Big History'.

The Symposium will address a wide range of perspectives on time and materiality in the fields of art practice, cultural studies, philosophy, history, linguistics, heritage, and archaeology. The intersections between these varied perspectives will provide a forum for productive discussion and debate.

The convenors of the 46th Annual Symposium are **Dr Robin Torrence FAHA** and **Dr Anne Clarke**. <http://www.humanities.org.au/Events/AnnualSymposium.aspx>