



2005 Public Lecture Series

Wednesday 15 June 2005

7.30 pm, Manning Clark Theatre 6, ANU

FARMERS, FISHERS AND WHALEMEN

THE SETTLEMENT LANDSCAPE OF LORD HOWE ISLAND

KIM OWENS

Once a provisioning post for wearisome whalers and now a peaceful holiday spot, Lord Howe Island has seen several changes of fortune since it was first discovered in 1788. One of few Pacific islands to have had no human occupation prior to European contact, Lord Howe was settled by a handful of New Zealanders in 1834, who established a provisioning depot for passing whaling ships. The slowly growing community was paradoxically both physically and socially isolated while being part of international trade networks that spanned across the Pacific. By looking at the development of the settlement landscape and aspects of daily life, Lord Howe presents a unique opportunity to explore numerous issues in archaeology, including processes of island colonisation, isolation, frontiers, colonialism, empire and oceanic trade. This lecture will give an overview of Lord Howe's history and present preliminary results from three months fieldwork undertaken late last year.



Ms Owens (on the right) with volunteer assistant, Hugh on site at the Old Nichols Garden dig, North Bay.

Kimberley Owens is an honours graduate from James Cook University in Townsville, with research interests in historical archaeology, landscapes and heritage issues. She is almost in the third year of her PhD and hopes to submit before September 2006.

All welcome, entry is by gold coin donation at the door.

Please join us afterwards for light supper and a chat – find out how 'down to earth' archaeologists really are.

And The Dead Shall Speak Again

The Excavation of Man Bac Cemetery, Vietnam

Damien Huffer

As our van once again pushed valiantly forward through the morning fog, that familiar yet eerie mix of excitement and foreboding settled over all the passengers inside (or perhaps it just singled me out). Every day before the sun was fully up, this fog enveloped the single paved road, as well as the rutted dirt tracks leading off it, which separated the unusually grandiose hotel that our multinational crew was holed up in the town of Tam Diep, just along the major north-south highway artery of Viet Nam from the mortuary site of Man Bac which we continued to excavate from December 2004 to January 2005. The continuous traffic sounds at all hours never let you forget this!

After packing a van and jeep full of people, packs and gear, we traveled along first the highway (past the open store fronts just opening for morning business, the kitchens heating up their first bowls of noodle soup for the day, and the ever present throng of bicycles, cars, busses, vans, pedestrians, and occasional cattle or buffalo that constitute a typical street scene), then up a back road behind the town and into rice and corn fields amongst the karst limestone mountains. Arriving at a food pick-up spot (small villages with little elderly women working hard in kitchens are almost always a sign of good, or at least mysterious, food to eat), we then passed under a large Shinto-esque gate (bearing Chinese and old Vietnamese characters proclaiming “White Lotus Village”), and continued along an increasingly narrow dirt track amongst the mountains, fields, irrigation embankments and huts until the road ended at an old, dilapidated iron gate; of course enveloped in fog.

Interestingly, this gate marked the entrance to another cemetery, much more recent (and indeed artificial as it consists of several fragmented secondary burials saved from ruin by damn construction in the 1800’s and reburied here in ossuaries). Did I mention that these individuals were converted from one religion to another as a condition for reburial c. 1911? I bet you will agree that that was a sneaky thing to do no? Well, irregardless, once the fog had cleared with the morning sun and we all rounded the last bend in the path, we arrived at our 6X6 meter pit, nestled in the shelter of a ring of karst mountains, and, like most other days, our first site was one of several dead people staring back at us.

2005 Lecture Series

7.30pm in Manning Clark Theatre 6 (unless specified)

Date	Speaker	Title
16 March	Mal Booth	Fire Support Patrol Base Coral: Using Material Culture to Reveal What Happened One Night in May, 1968.
20 April	Mike Austin	Environmental catastrophes: new lessons from history?
18May	Dr Josephine Flood	The Aboriginal Story in the ACT from deep past to moth hunting
15 June	Kim Owens	Farmers, Fishers and Whalers: The settlement landscape of Lord Howe Island
20 July	Peter White	Axes and Are: stone tools of the Duna and their implications
17 August	Richard Hekimian	TBA
21 September	Kath Szabo	The Ebb and flow of tradition in an island world: Shell beads in island Southeast Asia
19 October	Mike Morwood	Little Women: discovery of a new human species in Indonesia and the consequences.
16 November	Peter Dowling	Archaeology and the ANZACs

Call for contributions

We've had a few articles written by CAS members for Old News...have you got something archaeologically interesting to say? An anecdote? A joke!?...contact the editor at the details below....seriously, this is your newsletter, and it can only be as interesting as you make it!

Ad Space

Got anything archaeological to advertise? If you know of, or are running fieldwork this year and you need volunteers, or you want to volunteer for work, then drop us a line, and we'll advertise it for you in Old News. Websites and archaeological events are also welcome!

2005 CAS COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

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CAS Trip to Joadja.

FIELD TRIP

The next CAS field trip will see us heading out to the old abandoned Shale mining township at Joadja on Sunday 17 July, 2005. The township itself contains a wide range of remains, ranging from houses to a hotel stables and much of the mining and refinery buildings. Some of you may recall that CAS members and supporters did some archaeological work on the town remains in the late 1990's and produced a large report on some of the sites. In addition, we had a talk on our work and the history of the place given by Rob May, a previous president, and by Leonie Knapman, who has spent most of her life researching and writing on the site.



House remains at Joadja

Since our work there, the township has acquired a new owner who has made it into a tourist attraction. Disneyland for archaeologists!



Remains of Joadja Bakery

The site is in the hills to the west of Mittagong and reached by the Joadja Road just beyond the northern end of the town. It is about a two half hours drive from Canberra. Once there the owner will then take us for a guided tour of the site for several hours. After that we can have lunch and look at the place on our own.

More details will be sent out shortly, but in the meantime could anyone who may be even slightly interested tell us via email (contact@cas.asn.au) or in person at the June meeting so that we can get some idea about numbers.



Main street of the Joadja Township

So why did we find ourselves in this situation day after day? Well, I had come to carry out fieldwork for an MA thesis because myself and my supervisor, Dr. Marc Oxenham, strongly suspected that the 16 complete or fragmentary burials recovered in similar grid excavations in 1999 and 2001 (by a professional Vietnamese crew, led by Dr. Nguyen Kim Dung [pronounced Zoom], who granted participatory permission) was only the tip of the iceberg. The approx. 1-1.5m of occupation and midden material above the cemetery, dating c. 3500BP, had already provided much information regarding the material culture, and perhaps domestic living habits, of people during the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age.

A great increase in the diversity of material culture in response to domestic agriculture and livestock, more permanent settlements and an increase in trade and exchange between riverine and coastal communities was ensuring that many objects first made in bronze c. 3,500BP were already in existence, just awaiting the metal. The 2004 season provided well in this regard, and the spatial clustering of 1999 and 2001 burials strongly suggested we'd find more in '04. What we were not expecting was to hit a veritable jack-pot of 29 more burials, most in excellent condition! Just from on site measurements and basic physical anthropology, we could tell that nearly 80% of these people were children (newborn to 5), while four teenagers were present. Both circumstances are quite rare for Southeast Asia, suggesting both a short natural life span and a likely small population which suffered quite a high mortality rate, perhaps from settling a river area approx. 1km from the ocean rife with virulent diseases. Two child pot burials were recovered, a distinct rarity for Vietnam at this time, a young man and child were buried together in a double grave (also rare), and one obviously special eight year old was buried with two pots, a shell necklace, two shell knives in her hands, and laid on a bed of shells! Other rare goods include a rhinoceros tooth, and a jade bead, both with the first pot burial. This was one of the last people buried, thus even some temporal change in traditions can be seen. This is opposed to the typical one or two red-ware vessels (mostly small pots for food storage) with one of only three decorative types per grave, or the occasional bone or stone tool or loose shell.

This preliminary evidence shows that the survivors, in accordance with expected Neolithic/Bronze Age patterns, exhibited a generally egalitarian social structure via mortuary ritual. They seem to have treated status and perhaps gender differentiation (not hierarchical ranking per se) as important only for select individuals, not connected solely to those of one particular sex or age. This suggests that some measure of individual personhood was already in place by this time, and if accurate, could greatly influence how archaeologists look at other small-scale prehistoric burial sites in the region. Thus, the motivation of all involved to conduct further work is quite high and both more excavation and in-depth skeletal analysis are planned for the future to glean more information about their lives from their deaths. The great results of 2004 have ensured that someday, headlights will once again break the early morning fog!

Joke o' the week

By the Amazing Disappearing Beer Can

Q. What do you call someone who digs up angry people?

A. A narkaeologist <badoom..ching!>



CANBERRA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Canberra Archaeological Society was formed in 1963 to cater for the needs of all people interested in archaeology. The Society holds monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of each month (Feb to Nov). Meetings are held in Lecture Theatre 6 of the Manning Clark Theatres at 7.30pm.

Membership Application 2005 – Canberra Archaeological Society

Name(s):

Address:

Phone:

Email (if you wish to receive society announcements):

Circle YES to receive your newsletter via email

Please circle membership type:

Family \$40 Single \$30 Concession \$20

Please return membership form with payment to:

The Treasurer, Canberra Archaeological Society
LPO Box A86
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2601

Cheques should be made payable to: CANBERRA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY INC.