

Editorial

The humanities are currently facing serious political, social and economic challenges, causing major concerns for universities and the cultural heritage management and museums sectors, not only in Australia and New Zealand, but also for our colleagues in Canada, the USA and the United Kingdom. In Canada for instance, budget cuts have hit hard at the archaeological work of Parks Canada – not only have the numbers of archaeological staff been cut, but funding for the system of artefact repositories that serve their respective regions has also been reduced. I was fortunate to visit Québec in 2011 looking at some of their distinctive ventures based on colonial period archaeology, such as the Pointe-à-Callière Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History and the public archaeology programs of the World Heritage listed Québec City. In both cases I was struck by the strong and fruitful collaboration between the city and regional heritage authorities, museums and local universities. Pointe-à-Callière is a highly successful business and tourist destination that also supports ongoing archaeological field schools with students and staff from the University of Montréal, while I observed similar close collaboration between the staff of the Ville de Québec, Parks Canada and Laval University (eg Moss 2009)¹.

In this atmosphere of fiscal constraint, it seems somewhat ironic therefore that in Australia we have recently seen several significant initiatives that go to the heart of a long term problematic in the relationship between heritage management and historical archaeological research: namely, how to store and facilitate access to the accumulated wealth of archaeological data collected largely under the auspices of heritage management legislation. 2011 saw the launch of NSW Archaeology Online, an on line digital archive of grey literature, hosted by the University of Sydney Library, that has already made over 1,000 unpublished historical archaeological reports available (Gibbs and Colley in press). A related initiative is being developed at La Trobe University – the Australian Historical Archaeology Database (AHAD) for historical archaeological catalogue data and associated stratigraphic and historical records. While a third project, based at the University of NSW, the Federated Archaeological Information Management System (FAIMS), was also awarded Australian federal government funding to develop a suite of tools to enhance archaeological data sharing (Ross 2012). While each of these projects is university based, all feature significant collaboration across the museum and cultural heritage management sectors. While these projects face challenges in terms of building the sustainability of their digital archives and tools, they are a hugely important first step in building a vibrant research future for historical archaeology, opening new possibilities for cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration and providing exciting opportunities for education and training. For those of us also concerned with the ethics of heritage management and conservation, digital archives and data sharing tools will also help provide the much needed evidence and new products to justify continued public investment in archaeology. It will be fascinating to monitor the building impact of the availability of these on line resources for archaeology through the lens of journals like *Australasian Historical Archaeology*.

I turn now to the volume at hand – Volume 29 of AHA continues to demonstrate the growth in material culture studies in Australian historical archaeology, with papers on three different categories of artefacts – buttons, ceramics and

glass. The papers on ceramics and glass present richly contextualised analyses focusing on material culture in the construction and maintenance of class and social status, through ideologies of gentility (Hayes) and temperance (Lampard and Staniforth). While the third study of the buttons from the North Brisbane Burial Ground (McGowan and Prangnell) analyses, dates and identifies the buttons recovered from 34 burials, not only shedding light on burial practices of the period, but also providing comparative material for future studies.

Davies, Lawrence and Turnbull however, return to one of the central interests or themes of the historical archaeology of Australia and New Zealand: the effects of the 19th century mining boom on landscape and environments, especially in this case the rapid development of infrastructure for hydraulic power. Using both archival research and archaeological survey on a broad landscape scale, the authors skilfully illuminate a complex history of interaction and competition between government and private interests in the scramble to control precious water resources.

This volume also includes two research notes on industrial sites- one on a blacksmith's shop near Townsville in northern Queensland (Clarkson) and the other looking at the remains of whaling around Port Gregory on the mid-west coast of Western Australia (Rodrigues). Clarkson's paper *Forging Ahead* presents her work in progress on the excavation of a small blacksmith's business and its role in colonial expansion and settlement of this part of Queensland in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Rodrigues' report on whaling related remains around Port Gregory confirms the archaeological potential and heritage significance of these vulnerable shoreline sites, which it is hoped may be the subject of further investigation in the future.

In thanking Kate Quirk for her continuing work as Reviews Editor, I would also like to draw readers' attention to the review of the important new overview of Australian historical archaeology by Susan Lawrence and Peter Davies. This impressively comprehensive work is already proving to be an indispensable reference book and works particularly well in providing both researchers and students with a skilful synthesis of the major themes in historical archaeological research in Australia. It certainly fills a major publication gap in a field of research that has changed so much since Connah's earlier overview, *Of the Hut I Buildded* published in 1988. Connah's review of Lawrence and Davies in this volume contains some reflective 'future casting' about 'where to next' for historical archaeology – perhaps a move away from its past emphasis on the social issues of 'gender, status, ethnicity and identity' to more environmental concerns, responding to current interest in climate change and environmental history? I think this turn is highly likely, but I suspect that identity will continue to be a key concern for historical archaeologists in the context of ongoing cultural globalisation, and this interest will draw oxygen from the expanding fascination with memory and heritage. Perhaps also the so called 'material turn' in the humanities and social sciences (Bennett and Joyce 2010) will challenge archaeologists to re-state their approaches, methods and theories of human interaction with the material world in the face of competition from cultural studies!

Linda Terry continued her meticulous and efficient work as Editorial Assistant for this volume. I am so grateful to Linda for her organisation and skill and she is a joy to work with— thanks so much Linda! I also extend my gratitude to all members of the Editorial Board, with special thanks to Jon

¹ Thank you to my hosts and guides in Québec including William Moss, Louise Pothier, Christina Cameron and Dinu Bumbu.

Prangnell, Iain Stuart and Jane Lydon for extra advice and support. Thanks also to the authors and anonymous reviewers whose work is integral to maintaining a quality journal. Finally I am very pleased that Volume 30 of *Australasian Historical Archaeology* will focus on historical archaeological research in New Zealand, following the very successful 2011 Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology conference at the University of Otago.

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