This journal includes three papers on subjects around the periphery of goldmining. The first is Brett Stubbs’ paper on the local attempt to extract gold from sea water at Broken Bay. It is one of two sites internationally associated with legitimate and scientific attempts at establishing processing sites. All failed. Kate Quirk’s paper is based on her PhD and is on the goldmining town of Paradise. It draws on a considerable quantity of early Australian research on perceptions of goldmining towns and concepts of masculinity and the bush, and the false perceptions of these places as masculine. Kate reinforces the threads of Susan Lawrence and Linda Young on the concepts of Victorian ideals also being found in remote goldmines and the presence of many women and children in these places. This paper contests the image of goldrush towns as places where men’s lives revolved around mining and male-related activities. Gordon Grimwade continues his research on the overseas Chinese with a focus on ‘pig ovens’ and presents a fascinating mixture of oral history and research to provide a view of how these ovens would have operated within overseas Chinese communities. It presents a modern detailed roasting of a pig as witnessed on a recent trip to New Zealand.

The three other papers are drawn from a session I organised at the New Ground Conference in Sydney on the archaeology of Parramatta. Two of the papers I have co-authored. Mike Macphail has been researching the pollen in Parramatta and Sydney soils for 20 years. In 1999, the first journal I guest edited, Mike wrote a synthesis of pollen found on sites in Sydney. Ten years later he and I have written a synthesis of the fossil pollen recovered from sites in Parramatta. Mike has addressed the story of pollen through a whole range of phases and 11 separate sites to provide an alternative view of Parramatta’s colonial landscape. This synthesis provides a basis for understanding the types of features/deposits which are useful to sample and appropriate sampling strategies to use. Casey & Lowe take many more soil samples then we send off for analysis for either soil or pollen. We treat samples as much a part of the archive as artefacts, photographs and context sheets. Mike has identified a new palynomorph which has proved useful in recognising archaeological deposits associated with human sewage in Parramatta and Sydney. It is Cloacasporites sydneyensis n. sp. and it is described and illustrated in Appendix 1.

Robyn Stocks has been cataloguing and writing reports on artefacts from Casey & Lowe sites since 2002. Her work at Parramatta has provided new insight into a whole range of artefacts. Robyn’s work on roofing tiles, reed pipes and bone buttons and their manufacture has underlined how important it is that we support artefact specialists by not only funding their cataloguing but insisting that clients pay for artefact reports and analysis. Robyn’s work on these three categories proves that there is always something more to learn about artefacts from early sites. In fact, little of substance has been previously published on these categories in Australia because of the failure to create comparable datasets. The treatment of artefacts from sites in NSW is an issue. Very few consultants are using minimum item (or vessel) counts, and very few are funding specialist artefact reports or analysis of the artefacts. If we do not do this work there is very little new to say about what has been found on a site, we cannot make clear relationships with specific owners or occupants and we cannot address a whole range of research questions, especially those relating to material culture and consumerism. This is part of the reason why university students struggle to use the results from urban excavations for their research, due to the failure of excavated deposits to be easily comparable.

The sixth paper is authored by Denise Donlon, myself, Wolfgang Haak and Christina Adler. Denise Donlon has been working with human skeletal remains both in Australia and overseas for many years. She worked on the excavation, recording and analysis of six perinates from the Parramatta convict hospital, Parramatta Justice Precinct. When we commenced excavation at the site in 2005, I considered it likely that we might find remains of amputated limbs and possibly stillborn infants. Both were eventually found. The discovery of a burial with two infants and evidence of a further four infants provided us with a fascinating opportunity to examine a relatively rare resource in colonial Australia, the remains of early ‘new Australians’. This paper reviews the archaeological context to provide a solid basis for their attribution and dating and as the basis for the discussion of the significance of the remains and the evidence for variable disposal practices during the convict period (1792-1840s). The mtDNA analysis undertaken by the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA, University of Adelaide is the first example of DNA analysis to be published in this journal but probably not the last. It proves that even with quite poor bone material mtDNA can be recovered and prove to be useful in the study of nineteenth-century human remains.

This is my last editorial as Journal Editor. It has been a great privilege and honour to edit Australasian Historical Archaeology since 2003 (vol. 21). Many authors, reviewers and assistants have provided much needed help during this time. As an editor you have to provide sound guidance, choose referees carefully, make sure that the quality is good and proffer new insights into the historical archaeology of Australasia. I receive occasional comments from the community saying how useful they find the journal, that they use certain papers for teaching; I wish I was certain that it was adequately used throughout the archaeological community. It is with some pleasure that I announce that the journal’s ranking has been raised to A by the Australian Research Council (ARC) in the Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA) journal list. This list is used to evaluate research as part of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative. A very high note on which to end my editorship.

I will continue to be involved as ASHA’s General Editor but want to focus my energies more on research and Casey & Lowe’s exciting consulting projects. My thanks to Tony Lowe who made the completion of this annual journal achievable. Thanks to Martin Gibbs, Susan Lawrence, Neville Ritchie, Alistair Paterson, Tracy Ireland, and Kate Quirk who as Presidents, Reviews Editors and occasional editors offered support and important contributions to the annual publication. Thanks to the many referees, including the aforementioned: Heather Burke, Eleanor Casella, Sarah Colley, Peter Davies, Denise Donlon, Martin Gibbs, Gordon Grimwade, Ian Jack, Wayne Johnson, Colin Pardoe, Iain Stuart, Graham Wilson, and others – your thoughtful work and time are appreciated. Many thanks for the hard work and patience of the authors who provide the most important contribution to the journal, the papers. My best wishes to the new editor.