Port Essington: The historical archaeology of a north Australian nineteenth-century military outpost

Studies in Australasian Historical Archaeology 1

Jim Allen
Published by Sydney University Press, 2007

In 1966 Jim Allen undertook the first professional archaeological excavation of a European site in Australia. His investigation of the 1840s military settlement of Victoria, established at Port Essington, explored the history and archaeology of the short-lived settlement, tackling for the first time many of the themes which continue to underlie historical archaeological research – isolation, the responses of poorly equipped and inexperienced colonists, material culture and trade networks, the impact of inept government bureaucracies, disease and health, and relations with the Indigenous population. Allen's main theoretical thrust concerned the problems of integrating written and archaeological data, which remains a central issue in the discipline of historical archaeology in Australasia.

Recognised for 40 years as a pivotal study in Australian historical and contact archaeology, ASHA's publication of Port Essington makes this important and still highly relevant work widely available for the first time. The volume is published complete with the original data tables and graphs and is lavishly illustrated, with a retrospective by Jim Allen (now Emeritus Professor in the School of Historical & European Studies in La Trobe University). Port Essington will appeal as a reference book to both students and professional archaeologists.

Member's Price $AUD 40 + p&h

The Shore Whalers of Western Australia: Historical Archaeology of a Maritime Frontier

Studies in Australasian Historical Archaeology 2

Martin Gibbs
Published by Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology and Sydney University Press, 2010

Every winter between 1836 to 1879 small wooden boats left the bays of southwest Western Australia to hunt for migrating Humpback and Right whales. In the early years of European settlement these small shore whaling parties and the whale oil they produced were an important part of the colonial economy, yet over time their significance diminished until they virtually vanished from the documentary record.

The Shore Whalers of Western Australia uses archival research and archaeological evidence to examine the history and operation of this almost forgotten industry on the remote maritime frontier of the British Empire, and the role of the whalers in the history of early contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people.

Member's Price $AUD35 + p&h
Archaeology of the Chinese Fishing Industry in Colonial Victoria

Studies in Australasian Historical Archaeology 3

Alister M Bowen

Published by Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology and Sydney University Press 2013

The arrival of some 35,000 Chinese gold miners to Victoria during the 1850s increased demand for fish, a Chinese dietary staple. By the mid-1850s, some overseas Chinese people in Australia were pursuing a livelihood from fish. They fished, purchased great quantities of fish from European fishermen, cured fish on a large scale, constructed infrastructure, and made sums of money far greater than any European fishing operation. Until now, nobody really knew anything about the fish-curers; it seems to have been a forgotten part of Australia’s history.

The focus of this monograph is the Chinese involvement in Victoria’s colonial Fishing Industry. The aims are to establish if archaeological sites representing a Chinese fishing industry exist, to identify and interpret what artefacts such sites contain, and to better understand the complex social and cultural systems by which they operated. While operating within a European based society, Chinese people in colonial Australia maintained a highly secretive, tightly woven, self-sufficient style of social organisation that enabled them to successfully turn economic opportunities into capital. Documentary evidence for Chinese involvement in Victoria’s fishing industry is very limited. In order to explore and describe aspects of their activities, and to construct and test related hypotheses, historical archaeological investigation proved to be a most rewarding avenue.

Members price: $AUD 35 + p&h

An Archaeology of Institutional Confinement: The Hyde Park Barracks, 1846–1886

Studies in Australasian Historical Archaeology 4

Peter Davies, Penny Crook and Tim Murray

Published by Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology and Sydney University Press 2013

The archaeological assemblage from the Hyde Park Barracks is one of the largest, most comprehensive and best preserved collections of artefacts from any nineteenth-century institution in the world. Concealed for up to 160 years in the cavities between floorboards and ceilings, the assemblage is a unique archaeological record of institutional confinement, especially of women. The underfloor assemblage dates to the period 1848 to 1886, during which a female Immigration Depot and a Government Asylum for Infirm and Destitute Women occupied the second and third floors of the Barracks. Over the years the women discarded and swept beneath the floor thousands of clothing and textile fragments, tobacco pipes, religious items, sewing equipment, paper scraps and numerous other objects, many of which rarely occur in typical archaeological deposits. These items are presented in detail in this book, and provide unique insight into the private lives of young female migrants and elderly destitute women, most of whom will never be known from historical records.

Price: $AUD40 + p&h