

OBITUARIES

Vale Alister Malcolm Bowen (1968–2018)

The ASHA community has lost a valuable member with the passing of Alister Bowen on 16 May 2018. Alister was best known for his contributions to the scholarship of the Overseas Chinese in Australia and his many works on that subject are widely cited.

Alister's unpretentious manner belied his incredible breadth of expertise. He was born on 7 November 1968 in Canberra and grew up spending time in the bush. Alister left school at 15 and apprenticed as a plumber with his father. He worked on the construction of Parliament House and was the youngest, smallest member of that big project. Alister became licensed in operating a variety of heavy equipment including backhoes, buses and boats, and by the time he was in his early twenties he was successfully running his own bobcat company. A year's leave to travel in the US and UK opened Alister's eyes to the possibilities offered by education. He returned to Canberra and studied at night to qualify for entry to university. At ANU he studied archaeology and geography and graduated with Honours in Archaeology in 1999.

Alister's intellectual curiosity was not yet satisfied. Alister's love of fishing prompted him to explore the early history of the industry and particularly the role of the Chinese. He moved to Melbourne to be with his partner Carol Julian and got to work looking for likely sites along the coast of south-eastern Australia. When he was ready Alister enrolled in a PhD at La Trobe University, graduating in 2007. His groundbreaking research on Chinese fish curing was based on excavations at Chinaman's Point, Port Albert. Alister's thesis, *The Chinese Involvement in Victoria's Early Fishing Industry*, was awarded a La Trobe Research Merit Citation. That was only one of the many awards bestowed on Alister for the excellence and originality of his research. While completing his thesis Alister presented a paper at the 2005 ASHA conference, receiving both the Best Student Paper and Best Overall Paper awards. His work was also recognised by the Chinese heritage community, receiving the Best Paper Award at the Dragon Tails conference in 2009. In the same year ASHA presented Alister with the Maureen Byrne Award for Best Post-Graduate Thesis.

Alister believed strongly in the public dissemination of research and made sure that his work reached a wide audience. He worked closely with the local community in Port Albert to develop a display at the Port Albert Maritime Museum. He spoke on the radio and on several television programs. Alister also published his work extensively in academic journals. The list of journals that featured his work indicates the scope and significance of Alister's work. It includes heritage journals, local history journals, community-focused publications, and local, national and international archaeological journals. His thesis was subsequently published in the ASHA monograph series as *Archaeology of the Chinese Fishing Industry in Colonial Australia*. In documenting the full extent and importance of Chinese fish curing Alister's work made a significant contribution to the study of the overseas Chinese.

Alister accomplished all of this while being primary carer for his two children, Harriett and Hugh on a full-time and then part-time basis. It was the birth of Alister and Carol's daughter Harriet that prompted Alister to return to study. He saw it as the perfect opportunity. Alister would put Harriet on the bike and cycle in for supervisions. If she fussed Alister would calmly give her a bottle and keep talking. When their son

Hugh was born Alister just continued. By then he had finished his excavation at Port Albert. There were artefacts to be catalogued so Hugh was propped in the baby seat on top of the bench in the lab while Alister worked. When Hugh was a bit bigger Alister set up a playpen in the corner and Hugh played in there. Alister was more effective than anyone at making La Trobe a family-friendly workplace. He was a trail-blazer.

Alister's incredible patience, determination, and capacity to get things done with such grace made him a natural leader. His practical skills, personal style, and intellectual curiosity made him the perfect archaeologist. Alister's approach to planning fieldwork, looking after the logistics of the volunteers, excavation, and cataloguing were all meticulous. His scholarship was highly original, perhaps because of his own wide experience and unconventional route to academia. Alister uncovered dimensions of Chinese history that are still largely unknown. His curiosity and need to explain what he found drove him to many new discoveries about the history of the Chinese fishing industry, the organisation of labour and capital, and the small details of how the men lived their lives. Alister looked carefully at each artefact and made them reveal secrets that others would have missed.

Alister moved back to Canberra with his family in 2012, where he worked in commercial archaeology and devoted himself to caring for his family and giving his children a loving childhood full of adventure and fun. Alister was still at the beginning of his career as an archaeologist with many more contributions to make. He was a fine scholar, valued colleague, and good friend. We regret his passing and the loss of his insight, humour and skill. Alister is survived by his partner Carol and children Harriet, Hugh and Samm. He will be greatly missed.

Susan Lawrence

with assistance from Carol Julian

Alister Bowen's Publications

- 2012** *The Archaeology of Chinese Involvement in Victoria's Colonial Fishing Industry*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- 2011** 'Some Social, Historical and Characteristic Aspects of Australia's Colonial Period Chinese Fish Curing Sites', *Historic Environment* 23(3):15–23.
- 2011** 'The Merchants: Chinese Social Organisation in Colonial Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 42(1):25–44.
- 2010** 'The Central Role of Chinese People in Australia's Colonial Fishing Industry', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 12:97–118.
- 2008** 'Dating a Chinese Fish Curing Camp at Port Albert, Victoria', *The Artefact: Pacific Rim Archaeology* 30.
- 2006** 'Excavation at a Colonial Chinese Fish Curing Site in Victoria's South Gippsland Region', *Archaeology in Oceania* 41(1):37–41.
- 2006** 'Colonial Chinese Fish Curing Activities in Victoria, Australia', *The Artefact: Pacific Rim Archaeology*, 29:4–13.
- 2006** 'The Chinese Involvement in Victoria's Colonial Fishing Industry', *Coastline: The Coast Action/Coastcare Newsletter*, Edition 37 (non-refereed).
- 2004** 'Material evidence for early commercial fishing activities on the far south coast of NSW', *Australian Historical Archaeology* 22:79–89.
- 2004** 'Gippsland's Chinese Fish-Curing Industry: An Ongoing Archaeological Study', *Gippsland Heritage Journal* 28:45–50.
- 2003** 'The archaeology of early commercial fishing activities in New South Wales: a theoretical model', *Bulletin of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* 27:9–18.

Vale Barry McGowan (1945–2018)

Friend and colleague Barry John McGowan was born on 18 June 1945. Barry's first degree, and his first career, were in economics. After gaining a Bachelor of Economics at the University of Adelaide in 1967, Barry spent two years as 'Assistant to the Economist', South Pacific Commission, Noumea, under the Australian Volunteers Abroad Scheme. From 1970 to 1996 he worked in the Commonwealth Departments of Health, Territories, Trade and Industry, Prime Minister and Cabinet, and finally as a Director in the Department of Industrial Relations.

Barry's inner archaeologist and historian, however, fought to break free of the bureaucracy, and after completing a Bachelor of Arts at the Australian National University in 1995, he left the public service and set himself up as a historian and heritage consultant. He had done a little moonlighting on leave before then, in 1993 and 1995 undertaking two major studies under the New South Wales component of the National Estates Grants Program (NEGP). As a consequence of that work he published two books, *Lost Mines* and *Bungonia to Braidwood*, the former of which was revised and republished as *Lost Mines Revisited*. Barry's desire to change direction was in part a result of extensive family holidays in the outback, which had led to his writing articles for *Australia Post* and *4X4 Magazine*.

Barry was a quiet and unassuming man, balancing a vibrant mix of disorderliness, unconventional approaches to challenges, energy and determination, faith and passion, with a healthy good humour. He had a deep interest in how people individually and as communities negotiated life in mining areas, and went about the physical activities of mining. As a subset of this interest, he developed a great empathy for Chinese communities, and wished to see their histories and life experiences better understood and promoted as a valuable part of Australia's history. His generosity of spirit towards local communities, his local informants and assistants, and to his wider network of professional colleagues was a hallmark of Barry's second career, as was his infectious enthusiasm for this work. In 2001, in conjunction with Lindsay Smith and Michael and Bronwen Van Leeuwen, Barry designed an exhibition at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, 'Southern Gold', on the

continuous contribution of the Chinese in the Canberra region. Barry wanted the information he had gathered and its analysis to get to the communities he was working with, and, experiencing the publishing difficulties many have experienced at some time, he initially self-published a series of regional mining studies (see the attached Publications list). Most of his later books (he wrote 17 if I count correctly) were published by commercial or government publishers. I had the pleasure of working with him on two of these.

Barry became a Research Associate at the College of Asia and Pacific at the ANU, and in 2011 was awarded a PhD from ANU for his thesis 'Dust and Dreams: a regional history of mining and community in south-east New South Wales 1850–1914', which consolidated his exhaustive work on mining and community over the previous years.

I know Barry was immensely happy that he was able to work on a series of studies of the history of Chinese communities in southern NSW over the past few years, under the title 'Tracking the Dragon', commissioned by the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga, the reports of which are now available online (see below). Barry was awarded a well-deserved Medal in the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to community history in June 2018. The Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, conferred the medal on Barry at his hospital bedside. Barry was touched—'I'll send him a book!'

Barry was active till the end; he always had plans. The last time we had a long talk was earlier this year when he was planning a trip to Nagasaki for an International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas meeting. Barry had been negotiating prostate cancer for 20 years with characteristic determination and unconventional methods, but it came back with unexpected virulence over the last few months, and on 1st of September 2018, Barry lost the battle and passed away peacefully with his loved ones by his side. He is survived by his partner Chong and sons Andrew and Douglas and step children Sean and Genie, brother Chris, and his much-loved grandchildren. Thanks to Andrew for providing family information.

Ave atque vale Barry.

Michael Pearson
Canberra