

## 'Musing amidst the ruins...'

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*This paper was given as an ASHA public lecture in November 1995 on the occasion of ASHA celebrating 25 years since its foundation. Professor Mulvaney was a founding member. The paper describes the development of historical archaeology in Australia.*

Embedded in Sir Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605, I, II, I) written 390 years ago is an anticipation of historical archaeology:

'Antiquities are history defaced', he wrote, 'or some remnants of history which have casually escaped the shipwreck of time'.

As I have achieved my Biblical three score years and ten, I too have been fortunate in surviving the shipwreck of time, so that I even remember watching bullock teams on the road near my Gippsland boyhood home; in 1932 I was taken on what then was termed a 'joy-flight' in the 'Southern Cross' piloted by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. Before you, therefore, stands a living source of industrial archaeology!

As a former professing archaeologist and a still professing historian, I feel honoured to be chosen to lecture on this celebratory occasion for the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology. Although a lapsed member, I can claim that I was a 1970 founding member of the Society.

Even more, while in London during 1961 I met the founding mother, Judy Birmingham, before, like the Swiss Family Robinson, she was cast upon an island shore. Vincent Megaw was then also packing his bags, en route to the same university department. It says much for their invisible baggage that Judy, a Near Eastern scholar, and Vincent, a Celtic Iron Age specialist, adapted to their new land by applying different archaeologies — even in the face of professorial disapproval.

Judy excavated on a large scale from 1967 at the Irrawang pottery and at Wybalenna from 1969, while Vincent dug Aboriginal sites, including Captain Cook's Landing Place, Kurnell. There, it is rumoured, he found Cook's fly button, a momentous discovery, whether classed as historical, colonial or industrial archaeology.

Edward Gibbon (1972:160) supplied me with an appropriate title, when he reflected in Rome in 1764, that '... as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol ... the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind'. Musing about ruins, their discovery and protection, is my theme while I celebrate the rise and success of Historical Archaeology. What follows are Mulvaney's circuitous ruminations or a perspective on the Australian course of Historical Archaeology. They are essentially personal and self-indulgent and I apologise to individuals for sins of omission.

Twenty-five years is a long time in archaeology, yet that span is better assessed within the intellectual and cultural context of forty years, when it might be claimed that Australian academic prehistory began.

Some contextual musings relate first to 1957, when Australia had nine underfunded and poorly staffed universities. Creative life generally observed state boundaries, and in its isolation and conformity it was judged by Gordon Childe, who died here that year, as comparing unfavourably in its intellectual prospects with life in medieval Iceland. The only centre which gave him guarded optimism was Broken Hill.

That same year the Murray Commission reported on university needs to the Menzies government and received a

positive response. Funding, staff numbers and morale increased significantly. By the time this Society was founded, universities numbered nineteen, research funding was easier and Australia boasted a National Library.

It also was at Melbourne University in 1957 that I began teaching an Honours undergraduate option in Pacific (and Australian) Prehistory, the first university teaching of the archaeology of our region in any Australian university. Perhaps it is not unduly self-centred, therefore, to cite my 1955 visit to the Fromm's Landing rock shelters in South Australia as the real beginning of academic archaeology. I was taken there by C. P. Mountford, who entrusted the place to my trowel. Although no permits or consultations were necessary in those legislation free and Aboriginal invisible years, I sought N. B. Tindale's endorsement and promised to lodge all finds with the South Australian Museum.

A few weeks later Norman Tindale attended the Melbourne ANZAAS meeting and presented his synthesis of prehistory, published in 1957 as 'Culture succession in south-eastern Australia from Late Pleistocene to the present'. Fred McCarthy produced his counter cultures the following year, while my own synthetic critique of all versions, written during 1959-1960, appeared in 1961 as 'The Stone Age of Australia'.

By the Sixties heritage issues had come to the fore, although not known then by that term. The National Trust movement in 1965 expanded interstate from its 1945 beginnings in NSW, to form the Australia Council of National Trusts. That Council sponsored a seminar in 1967 at the Australian National University on *Historic Preservation in Australia*. It is an interesting but neglected guide to current thinking. I note that Anne Bickford attended, but no other name merits recall here.

Robin Boyd recounted the campaign to save Burley Griffin's Capitol Theatre in Melbourne, the forerunner of many conservation campaigns, reflecting the burgeoning interest in preservation. Before I left Melbourne in 1965, Whelan the Wrecker was a local icon, sparing neither St Kilda Road mansions nor the Victorian architecture of Collins Street. It was in this context that Joseph Burke, Melbourne's professor of Fine Art made two salient observations at the seminar.

'Philosophers and critics might disagree about what was or was not a beautiful building', he stated, 'but the wrecker at least was infallible in his aesthetic perceptions. He invariably chose the best for destruction'.

'Conservation does not mean conservatism', he concluded in words which that national museum detractor, the Prime Minister, might ponder. 'It is an abuse of history to wrap ourselves up in dreams of the past, but no nation has become great by neglecting its past, or neglecting to honour it'.

The first voluntary body formed to protect the natural environment, the Australian Conservation Foundation, was established in 1965, while the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies came into being in November 1964. It sponsored a national conference in 1968 on the requirements for legislation, recording and conservation of Aboriginal sites and antiquities. At this meeting Jim Allen and Campbell

Macknight presented papers, the first public appearance of Historical Archaeology (McCarthy 1970).

By that time South Australia (1965), Queensland and NSW had statutes aimed to protect Aboriginal sites (though with varying degrees of will and staff support); South Australia even aimed to protect historic places older than 1865.

The recovery of cannons in the Barrier Reef from Captain Cook's *Endeavour* prompted Federal action in 1970 to conserve them, so projecting Colin Pearson into the applied materials conservation area. This was just in time to have facilities and expertise to deal with the Western Australian Dutch shipwrecks in the early seventies.

It was the McMahon Liberal-Country Party government which, in 1971, appointed Peter Howson as Australia's first Minister for Arts, Aboriginals and the Environment. He was a junior minister covering the portfolios of three junior ministers today — so what is new? One may be cynical, but Howson's appointment, like the creation of an Australia Council in 1968, signalled growing cultural awareness. The frenzy of the Whitlam era therefore cannot be understood without the previous decade of concern for what Whitlam termed 'heritage'. It was this intellectual milieu which also witnessed the emergence of this Society.

When I attempted to teach and research Australian prehistory in the fifties I had to clear the air by writing the 1961 critique. There were so many muddled fringe papers, assertive stone tool collectors and amateur digs that factual data was at a premium. Those papers lacked research design or theoretical framework. But these times were free of models, middle range theory and all the mandatory paraphernalia of today's research. Indeed, to consult the problems which I posed for solution, as I framed them in a paper for the inaugural AIAS meeting in 1961, is to read an exercise in simplicity (Sheils 1963:472-3; Mulvaney 1964). At least they were propositions posing questions for which fieldwork was to provide answers. They were not mere data-collecting exercises.

Evidently nobody published an equivalent initial review of problems and prospects in the relevant literature of Historical Archaeology. Possibly there was nothing to read, although I suspect that a narrow definition of the scope of historical archaeology and an understandable ignorance of Australian history by immigrant archaeologists explains this neglect in part. This blurred vision of relevant works of architects, engineers, and historians so that they were dismissed as having little to offer archaeologists.

Even in Britain, Historical Archaeology was a latecomer around 1955. Both Angus Buchanan (1972) and Arthur Raistrick (1973) termed their discipline Industrial Archaeology and restricted it to accurate observational and descriptive records, even nostalgic, but written with deep concern that monuments should be preserved. It was then a largely excavation-free discipline. Definitional debates also occurred in Australia, but full marks to the founders for their wisdom in terming it Historical Archaeology and including excavation within its purview. However, a full exposition of its scope awaited Graham Connah's splendid overview of 1988.

It is interesting to reflect on two aspects of the infant discipline. If the useful bibliography in the two first volumes of *The Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* (1983-1984) is a guide, they imply a confined outlook. Few references are listed earlier than 1966, while books offering bridging ideas or investigative potential are not included. I suggest that these included Geoffrey Blainey's *Tyranny of Distance* (1966), Geoff Bolton's *A Thousand Miles Away* (1963), Cox and Stacey, *Building Norfolk Island* (1971), and I even add my own *Prehistory of Australia* (1969).

It is interesting to reflect on contrasting attitudes to fieldwork in this land full of returned diggers who knew not how to dig. When I edited the first edition of the AIAS Manual,

*Australian Archaeology – a guide to field techniques* in 1968, I omitted advice on how to excavate, and even included arguments against the enthusiastic public undertaking excavations, as likely to encourage more digging than professions could supervise or publish. Historical Archaeology was involved in large scale public participation exercises from the outset. Perhaps neither policy succeeded in achieving site protection and full publication.

To judge from the broad and optimistic approaches of prehistorians, as reflected in the pages of *Mankind* during the sixties, the objectives of the founders of historical archaeology were more pragmatic and locally orientated. The more mundane recording of artefacts and uncovering of places seemed the purpose canvassed in the early Society newsletters. While my generation of prehistorians moved around the continent, allegedly cowboy archaeologists, the Society's *Newsletters* provide useful advice on the identification, catalogue and preservation of objects. A progress report in October 1970 sought 'the encouragement of nineteenth-century artefact studies by members', together with 'the collection and recording of miscellaneous information sent in by members on sites, documents or artefacts', as Society objectives.

The first *Newsletter* promised advice on clay pipes, nails, bottles, transfer-printed earthenware, and other items. All essential knowledge, of course, the springboard for major projects leading to wider horizons and problem-oriented research. In their essentials, in my opinion, the Society virtually adopted the British approach to Industrial Archaeology, but applied the principles more to the products of industry than to the mills, potteries or other surviving relics above ground; only here excavation was directed to finding those objects.

By 1983 archaeologists were aware of these limitations. In his insightful article in the first number of the *Journal* Graham Connah (1983:15) reflected that,

It seems to me that Australian historical archaeology is in many ways tending to become a stamp-collection exercise, painstakingly collecting and ordering information, simply because the relevant archaeological data contains so much that is intrinsically interesting, unusual, beautiful or even valuable.

Judy Birmingham and Dennis Jeans also conceded this interpretation in the same number of the *Journal* (1983:4). They noted that 'there is little sign of the explicit problem-oriented approach', characteristic in the USA, and gave reasons why 'model-testing as opposed to straightforward descriptive investigation' was important. Regrettably, in my opinion, the rising pre-eminence of the environmental impact statement as employer has meant that most fieldwork remains at the "let's go and see" level. Frequently that data is contained in unpublished reports, but seldom analysed and published with rigour, because consultancies do not cover those costs. Even so, I acknowledge that many non-salaried consultants do publish. Brian Egloff (1994:3) reports that about 80 per cent of 93 articles in volumes 1-9 of the *Journal* were contributed by authors who hold no academic position. Perhaps the record of historical archaeology consultants is better than that of prehistoric archaeologists.

At least today nobody except developers question the validity and practice of historical archaeology. Even though only a handful are in academic employment, term it what you may, it is embedded in cultural resource management and students are turning towards its study in departments formerly dedicated to prehistory. Yet, this acceptance applies neither to the terminology nor to much of the practice of prehistoric archaeology in contemporary Australia. The sensible and non-racially biased term 'prehistory' is politically incorrect to many academics and Aborigines, while the acceptance by

academics that Aboriginal people **own** their past, rather than being its **custodians** has drastically reduced the appeal of prehistoric research.

That all said, I turn now to what might be termed the prehistory of historical archaeology, a phenomenon in which I may claim to have been involved. I was not present, however, at the first token excavation, when on 4 January 1803, Matthew Flinders scabbled in the sand in the search for archaeological information.

Flinders hoped to identify the people whom he presumed to be from Asia, who left plentiful debris on island beaches in the Gulf of Carpentaria. We know them today as Macassans, a generic term for eastern Indonesian trepangers. When he landed on the Cove Peninsula he again found 'traces of some foreign people' near three abandoned huts. An air of disappointment pervades his remark (Flinders 1814, 2:183), 'but they were empty and nothing was buried underneath'.

In my 1961 survey article I cited this 'excavation', observing that it may prove a 'most rewarding region for future archaeological fieldwork' (Mulvaney 1961:99). Reports by anthropologists Lloyd Warner, Donald Thomson and Ronald Berndt all testified to Macassan influences on the coastal population, while the National Geographic Expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948 enabled Fred McCarthy to collect potsherds, some erroneously identified as Chinese Ming porcelain.

In 1965 I was able to assess the situation myself on a lone three month traverse around the Arnhem Land coast. I located several trepang processing sites, evidence for Australia's first export industry. My most exciting experience occurred on Entrance Island at the mouth of the Liverpool River, where in a tiny excavation, I recovered pottery in association with charcoal. The major candidate for systematic investigation, however, was a series of fourteen hearth lines on a small peninsula at Anuru Bay.

Back in Canberra, I had a month in which to prepare the Crosbie Morrison lecture in Melbourne, though my subject was obvious. Arnhem Land had convinced me of the significance of combining historical and anthropological evidence with archaeology, if comprehensive knowledge of Indonesian contacts with Australia and their influence on Aboriginal societies was to be obtained. I quote my assertions from that 1965 lecture, because in the following year Campbell Macknight returned to Anuru Bay to commence research for his PhD. His major study (1976) added a new dimension to Australian history.

It is my contention that a deep knowledge of the trepang industry is the prerequisite to the understanding of the early history of colonisation in tropical Australia; but its ramifications extend further than that. Here I would make a plea to historians of the Southeast Asian region between 1750 and 1850, to leave those dreary wastes of colonial records and direct their attention to humbler sources, the better to comprehend the human populations involved (Mulvaney 1966:455).

I have berated historians on many occasions for ignoring archaeological sources, although this should not apply to Sydney historians like Ian Jack and others. When in 1981 the editorial in the *Bulletin* of the Australian Historical Association advised on the employment value of consultancies, I reacted, because I consider it morally and nationally rewarding that many archaeologists — historic and prehistoric — were active in the voluntary public arena before financial reward even was an option (Mulvaney 1982:4).

I read your article on Public History (*AHAB*, No. 28, September 1981) with interest. It is indeed time that the

historians moved into the public forum, for prehistorians did so years ago. I regret, however, that it is economic necessity which appears as the current motivation. I find that so many historians have failed to grasp the moral or ethical need for them to take some public role. They have played little positive part in the National Trust movement, conservation issues or in the moves which produced the Hope Inquiry into the National Estate. This contrasts markedly with the prehistorians who moved into the Public arena in the past decade, despite their small numbers and the diverse calls on their time.

One notable omission from your report was the Hope Inquiry and the Australian Heritage Commission which resulted from it. It is this Commission today which, through the National Estate Program, has funded so much 'Public' research, including history. You refer to Port Arthur, which is a consequence of the AHC and pressure from *Prehistorians*. Norfolk Island is another example.

Jim Allen arrived at ANU around the same time as Campbell, but his thesis topic was undecided. Kangaroo Island prehistory was his likely topic, but he was destined for Port Essington. It happened in this way. All the historical sources for the Macassans referred to Raffles Bay and Port Essington as important trepanging harbours, while their contacts with the British settlements were close. While I was at Anuru Bay in July 1965, a CSIRO Wildlife survey was in progress on the Cobourg Peninsula, and my friend John Calaby surveyed Port Essington area. His enthusiasm for its ruins and his photographs made me regret that I had been unable to visit there.

When discussing possible topics with Jim Allen over a beer in the Staff Club, I mentioned Port Essington as a possibility and that clinched it. As we were a Prehistory department, however, the Aboriginal contact situation had to be emphasised. So Jim Allen and myself spent seventeen thrilling days of discovery there in 1966, ('Boys Own' language being appropriate). I trust that Jim writes the full saga of the Port Essington settlement, if not of our exciting time there.

When Jim Allen subsequently needed to consult overseas records and archaeological collections, I sought permission for his trip from the enlightened Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Sir John Crawford. He approved this precedent, for this was the first occasion when an ANU doctoral researcher was granted leave, including salary and some costs. As an historical archaeological aside, Sir John's nephew, Ian Crawford, was then undertaking research on the Macassans on the Kimberley coast for his London doctorate. A spin-off from these Arnhem Land projects reflects the value of interdisciplinary contacts. I enthused about the activities to Geoffrey Blainey, who incorporated the concept of limpet ports and other matters in the *Tyranny of Distance* (1966). He later was an examiner of Allen's thesis.

The landmark event of the 1970s for heritage issues must be the 1973-74 Hope Inquiry into the National Estate, for so much flowed from it. An interesting pointer to those times, however, was the omission of any archaeologist or historian from that committee. Indeed, professional historians were notable for their disinterest in the Inquiry. No historian or university history department is listed in the report as giving evidence. It is to the credit of this Society that it made a submission, as also did Judy Birmingham. Robert Edwards and myself had considerable contact with the committee on behalf of AIAS. Isabel McBryde also was active.

Only two of almost 400 pages of the Report were devoted to historic sites, defined in our sense, noting that some had archaeological significance. It recommended 'a national

inventory of Historic Sites', calling upon the States to introduce legislation to protect them (Hope 1974:175-6, 340).

When I was in Melbourne in August 1974, a chance encounter with a committee member, David Yencken, was to influence my own career and, I believe, assisted the cause of Historical Archaeology. I explained to Yencken that because of lack of input from historians, historical and archaeological places other than Aboriginal risked being underestimated by the Inquiry (as indeed they were). I had never met Yencken previously and was unaware that he was the prospective Chair of what then was being called the Interim Commission of the National Estate, later the Australian Heritage Commission.

Yencken's response was immediate. He asked me would archaeologists arrange a meeting on Historical Archaeology and the National Estate if funding was provided. My response also was immediate. In little more than three months, with the assistance of Isabel McBryde and Jim Allen that workshop involving 34 participants, was arranged for 7-9 December 1974. The grant was modest, so my wife and I provided the conference dinner at our home. It is relevant to quote from the letter of invitation which I sent to 39 persons (invitations were restricted to individuals rather than organisations, a matter which ruffled some institutional feathers):

Although a non-expert in historical or industrial archaeology, the destruction of sites, particularly rural ones, has long concerned me. Sites which have archaeological significance do not always attract the attention of local societies or the National Trust, for little may be observable above ground. In discussions with others, particularly Jim Allen and Isabel McBryde, I find they have similar worries.

My aim in writing to you is to invite you, as convenor, to participate in a discussion or 'workshop', where a number of concerned peoples could hammer out a list of important sites, and other suggestions, which could be submitted to the National Estate Committee for its consideration. I am envisaging sites which are not household words, and whose significance only persons such as those at this meeting are likely to comprehend. I believe that it is urgent that we should make submissions at the earliest opportunity.

A comprehensive inventory and check list of places and their classification into categories and themes was developed at the meeting. A Project Coordination Committee was approved both by that meeting and by the Interim Committee of the National Estate. This group of eleven included Judy Birmingham, Anne Bickford and Jim Allen. It met several times and advised the Interim Committee on various matters. Jim Allen was responsible for producing the 150 page *Report of the Project Coordination Committee on Historical Archaeology*, delayed until February 1978. Unfortunately, it was never published.

It was frustrating to observe the reinvention of that wheel in 1993, when an Australian Heritage Commission consultancy was given the task to establish thematic categories and inventories of representative places for National Estate listing. I guess the cost of that enterprise was considerably larger than the enthusiastic voluntary and unacknowledged service performed by the group in the 1970s.

Historical archaeologists during the 1970s also challenged conventional wisdom amongst architects concerning building restoration versus preservation and conservation. In those prosperous times the vogue for restoration of old houses was booming. In a paper delivered in November 1977, Anne Bickford, the conscience of historical archaeology, quoted Ruskin, who said that restoration is destruction. She went on to state, 'I know of no restoration project in Australia where

original parts of the structure have been left exposed, so that one can see what the original paint colours, and structural details looked like'. Architects, she continued, 'see themselves as arbiters of taste ... surely it is preferable to attempt to be more objective and to express the historical attributes of a building, rather than its special qualities as experienced by its restoration architect'.

We were unaware then that such pressures were to result in the 1979 Burra Charter. My own involvement in this process was unexpected and traumatic, because I felt obliged to assert principles similar to Anne Bickford's in the presence of the alleged offending practitioners.

The first occasion arose in Hobart during April 1975, when attending the Workshop on Building Materials Conservation. I was appalled to learn what architects and engineers intended to do at Port Arthur and what was in progress at Kingston, Norfolk Island, under the name of restoration. One proposal was to demolish Port Arthur's huge penitentiary and rebuild it. At Kingston, most houses, no matter what their current state of disrepair, were being restored as virtual Georgian clones without any archaeological input. The draft minutes of that meeting summarises my reaction:

**Professor Mulvaney** emphasised that those involved in the restoration work on Norfolk Island should consult with archaeologists as a large amount of historically valuable data could be included in the deposit of the remains. He added that no major monument should be touched without careful consideration of the more appropriate aesthetics, that is, in some cases, it might be better to conserve a ruin than to reconstruct a building.

I joined the Australian Heritage Commission in 1976, and as a Commissioner visited Norfolk Island late in 1977. Despite the 1975 Workshop, restoration had continued its archaeologically destructive path. I was confronted by yesterday's bulldozed devastation of the archaeological deposit surrounding the ruins of the crank mill at Kingston. It was intended to 'restore' that structure to provide housing for a museum. Its successive uses as a store, mill and whaleboat shed were being ignored, while all clues from archaeological investigation had been obliterated, even though the architect wanted to trace the sequence of building which was the objective of the trenching (Mulvaney 1978a).

My photographs sufficed to have the Administrator recalled to Canberra; the project was terminated; Jim Allen and Jane Lennon were sent to provide advice on future developments at Kingston.

The foundation of Australia ICOMOS followed in 1978. At the inaugural Beechworth meeting the Heritage Commission invited me to traverse the restoration/preservation theme (Mulvaney 1978). It annoyed architects present and as an enthusiastic amateur I possibly overstated my case. Criticism, however, was surely overdue. Since that time, with the advent of the Burra Charter (then accompanied by grumbles and dissent), I suspect that architects, historians and archaeologists have learned to work together better and with mutual benefits.

By about 1980 it could be said that historical archaeologists and their disciplinary kin had reached a critical mass. They played a prominent role in Australia ICOMOS, in framing the Burra Charter and in the affairs of the Australian Heritage Commission, assisting the nomination process which proceeded so rapidly (even with undue haste) that the massive *Heritage of Australia* register volume was published in 1981.

Consider the situation around this period. Graham Connah and his colleagues in 1978 published their report on *Captain Richards' House at Winterbourne*, a landmark for its comprehensive and succinct presentation, its excellent illustrations and the promptness of its publication. The seven

years of funding for the Port Arthur project began in 1979, though effectively from 1981, with archaeologist Brian Egloff as director and Richard Morrison and other historical archaeologists in support. Michael Pearson obtained his doctorate for a regional study which treated as a unitary continuum Aboriginal and European occupation and their material manifestations which impacted upon the landscape. More comparable studies are needed. In 1979 Judy Birmingham, Ian Jack and Dennis Jeans published their lavish volume on *Australian Pioneer Technology, Sites and Relics* directed at a more general audience. Miles Lewis, an architectural historian, had published *Victorian Primitive* in 1977, based upon comprehensive fieldwork on early vernacular architecture. This was field archaeology in the British sense. So also was Peter Bell's ongoing field study of domestic architecture in north Queensland mining towns.

By this time innovative maritime archaeology and conservation of Dutch and other wrecks was at the cutting edge of research in Western Australia, amply testified by publications of Jeremy Green, Colin Pearson and Grahame Henderson. Historical Archaeology often involving excavations had spread beyond NSW. Judy Birmingham had ventured to Wybalenna in 1969, although her report appeared in 1992. By 1980 research was ongoing at Port Arthur; in the ACT Jonathon Winston-Gregson excavated at Lanyon, with important consequences for the architect's planning and for historical interpretation; in Queensland Ray Whitmore championed the cause of engineering and mining heritage, publishing his history of *Coal in Queensland* in 1981; in Victoria, Peter Coutts conducted vigorous campaigns at several places, though not all readers were satisfied that the rapidity of his publication was prudent; meantime Jane Lennon provided balanced and insightful advice and administration; Eleanor Crosby excavated in the Northern Territory and this Society published her memoir on Fort Dundas in 1978, while Campbell Macknight's definitive Macassan book was published in 1976; in South Australia, C. St Claire-Johnson initiated a model historical engineering series on bridges.

Here then was the surge in interest which produced the progressive transformation of the original tatty *Newsletter*, from mimeographed pages through stapled cardboard covers to the glossy and well-illustrated journal of 1983 — thirteen years from infant to assertive maturity.

During the past decade or so a more reflective and critical approach has characterised historical archaeology. This is exemplified by the thoughtful social appraisal in Anne Bickford's 'The Patina of Nostalgia' (1981), critiques by Damaris Bairstow (1984), Tim Murray (1985) and Brian Egloff (1994), and Graham Connah's book (1988). I note with pleasure that Egloff cited my *Encounters in Place* (1989) when urging historical archaeologists to approach issues of relations between Aboriginal society and other 'outsiders' as I termed them. Since then, Judy Birmingham's memoir on Wyballena has appeared (1992), as also Tim Murray's Tasmanian research (1993). The large project being undertaken in Central Australia merits systematic input and dedication, for many sites are irreplaceable.

Just how much may be inferred about the consequences of racial exchanges is revealed in Carmel Schrire's imaginative and cogently written autobiographical reflections on South Africa. *Digging Through Darkness Chronicles of an Archaeologist* (1995) is a good read. In a model presentation for the general reader of the interaction between economic history, environmental conditions and racial interface, Schrire recounts her excavation at a Dutch outpost on Saldanha Bay. The outpost endured for sixty years from 1670, with drastic consequences for the indigenes.

During the years 1982–1984 environmental or cultural concerns were highlighted both in Australian politics and the

community in dramatic confrontations. The Tasmanian Dam dispute highlighted past and present environmental and cultural concerns on a canvas as broad as the landscape. In urban Sydney, society faced the choice on a city block between mindless tower block construction or the preservation of the site of First Government House. To the credit of archaeologists generally, in both issues they stood up to be counted for heritage preservation. Over a decade later it is ironic to consider that these great victories for common sense, environmental sanity and scientific responsibility have been so sidelined that the archaeological heritage of southwestern Tasmania, like Tasmanian forests, are prey to emotional and destructive forces. Those who fought the Sydney battle have been rewarded with a large pavement and the Museum of Sydney.

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