
CONFERENCE NOTES

ASHA Conference

The seventeenth annual ASHA Conference was held in Queenstown, NZ, from 3-6 October 1997

The second New Zealand ASHA conference was particularly lively, though attended only by about 50 people. The geographical representation was good with papers about most parts of Australia and New Zealand, from Broome to Auckland. The range of papers was more restricted with an overall emphasis on industry, particularly whaling and mining, which reflected partly the fact that much of New Zealand's historical archaeology is carried out by consultants in National Parks and partly the fact that Queenstown is on the edge of a former goldmining district.

We were taken to visit the former mining areas, which were principally water sluicing along the Shotover River. The landscape was already water-formed, with a bleak post-glacial topography of moraines and lakes, with minimal flora and fauna. Add massive artificial erosion and what you get is a landscape which is truly inhospitable: for the first thirty years 1862-1890, all food and some drinking water had to be carried in by pack animals along vertiginous slopes. Today's Queenstowners are as rugged as the first miners and have profitably converted the area to a series of tourist tortures, from skiing to white-water rafting to bungy jumping. We gathered up \$100 to see Ric McGovern Wilson, hereafter to be known as *Dr Ricochet*, plunge headfirst off the bridge at Skippers. That sight alone made the trip worthwhile.

A selection of the papers is to be published in volume 16 of our Journal (1998), to be edited by Neville Ritchie who organised the conference.

Aedeen Cremin

ICOMOS Conference

ICOMOS Conference, Burra, South Australia 28-30 November 1997

For a third time, ICOMOS have met in Burra with weighty issues to discuss. The first time was in 1977 when the organisation adopted the set of conservation principles for cultural heritage practice known as the '*Burra Charter*' (actually developed mostly in Canberra). This meeting had one day of papers which set the scene for three grand debates. These debates revolved around the review of the *Charter* and the revision circulated in July, new national cultural heritage initiatives currently being developed by the Federal government and Amendments to the *Native Title Act*, 1993 (Wik debate) The review of the charter took up most of the energy on the last two days.

A discussion ensued about how far the current format and content should be changed. The issue of how indigenous heritage could be more visibly

included in the scope of the document was hotly debated. Three Aboriginal people from New South Wales attended the conference and gave their views on the subject. Evelyn Marr (NPWS) was particularly adamant that the current document still does not make it clear enough that indigenous cultural heritage and people are part of the picture. Other criticisms included the over-emphasis of importance of fabric in assessment at the expense of other issues such as meaning, and the overly architectural language of some parts of the definitions. Its strengths were held to include the familiarity many users have with the current document and its association with policies in many areas of cultural heritage management. Briefly, the conference resolved to recognise the existing strengths of the charter and use some caution in adopting any revised charter. It was decided that further consultation regarding future revisions was needed with indigenous people.

This consultation would be conducted through a reference group which would liaise with ICOMOS. It would be established with Ms Marr's assistance. Many practitioners would be aware that the Australian Heritage Commission, the Register of the National Estate and State/Commonwealth links have been under review for some time. Discussion papers and information on this process can be accessed through the AHC's web site and by contacting it directly. Suffice to say, any changes made by the Federal government next year could have a huge impact on the way cultural heritage management continues in this country. ICOMOS are keen to monitor this process closely and are currently part of the Cultural Heritage Forum being consulted by the Minister. On 30 November 1997, those present unanimously agreed to send out a press release condemning the Government's proposed changes to the Native Title legislation. Finally, I would just like to remind ASHA members that ICOMOS is the peak body for cultural heritage management in Australia and an important professional organisation to join if you want to keep up with what is happening.

There are already a number of archaeologists involved in the general membership and on the executive committee, so please feel free to join us by writing to:

AUSTRALIA ICOMOS
PO Box E 303
Kingston ACT 2604.

Hilary du Cros

RESEARCH NOTES

Sydney University Theses

Five fourth year theses of obvious interest to members have just been completed by students at Sydney University. Abstracts of all Sydney theses

can be found (as these were) on the School's home page at

www.archaeology.usyd.edu.au.

Congratulations to Edwina, Bob, Pam, Fiona and Carlos.

Faunal analysis on the Rocks: Methods and Theories

My thesis concerns faunal analysis from excavations of nineteenth century historic sites from The Rocks, Sydney. Many different factors go into making up the pattern which forms the composition of an archaeological assemblage. Other factors go into determining the scope, focus and level of interpretation derived from the faunal data. Through an evaluation of site reports and interviews with faunal analysts and archaeologists familiar with The Rocks, I will be attempting to indicate whether all of these factors should be considered in interpretation. My thesis will determine whether looking at these sites with a North American or European focus on certain factors is inappropriate. Should certain factors be considered in interpretation? Do certain factors relate to unique features of Australian history and archaeology? The degree to which certain factors influence the faunal pattern and the interpretations will be discussed as part of a contribution to developing a body of literature specific to Australian historical archaeology.

Edwina Andrews

Pagan and its Monasteries: Time, Space and Structure in Burma's Ancient Buddhist City

Pagan is a medieval city in upper Burma, where more than 2,000 brick temples, monasteries and stupas remain from its heyday as the core of a Buddhist kingdom. Pagan is conventionally dated from around AD 1044 to AD 1283, when it supposedly went into rapid decline following an invasion by Kublai Khan's Mongol army. According to current archaeological evidence, however, Pagan was unstable decades before the Mongols arrived. Using new survey material, a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) model of temporal and spatial change at Pagan will be developed, and used to refute the 'crash due to invasion' theory. This 'time and space' model will also be used to test Michael Aung Thwin's hypothesis that the decline of Pagan was due to competition between the city's ruling elite and the increasingly influential clergy, which over stretched the city's resources in a decades-long religious building boom. The conclusion is that while archaeological evidence does support the Aung Thwin hypothesis, there were actually several significant oscillations in Pagan's history, and we must look for more complex models of social and structural change.

Bob Hudson

Public Perceptions of Australian Archaeology

What space does Australasian Archaeology occupy in the archaeology of the world, as the public sees

it? Do public perceptions affect the directions of archaeology?

On the basis of preliminary investigation, both overseas and in Australia I suggest that the level of knowledge on topics relating to the archaeology and history of Australia is poor, and that outcomes of Australian research are not considered, by the public, to be significant to the Australian contribution of knowledge about the past. This situation has resulted in Australasian research being down played in favour of bigger or European finds. A factor that cannot be underestimated in this issue is the diverse ethnic mix of the Australian population which ensures the deeply entrenched understanding of history and philosophy of a largely (until recently) European population. This in turn guarantees a continued public interest in the traditional archaeologies of which Australian is not yet a part. The repercussions of this affect funding, education, politics and the general image of Australia to Australians and the rest of the world. Additionally, archaeological interpretations and ideas can influence relations between the indigenous and non-indigenous population and this also plays a part in politics and social policy.

Pamela Kottaras

Convicting Artefacts: Norfolk Island Medicine, Archaeology and Museum Representation

This project involves an analysis of the artefacts excavated from the Civil (or Convict) Hospital privy from the second convict settlement on Norfolk Island, dating between 1829 and 1855. The assemblage includes medical items such as syringes, medicine cups, cupping glasses, medicine bottles, and other every-day items such as clay tobacco pipes, alcohol bottles, kitchen implements, buttons, shoes, tableware, bones, earthenware jars, and nails. The artefacts are discussed in light of their potential to allude to the experience of being a convict on Norfolk Island, and how this might be presented to the public in a museum display. It is argued that the representation of the convict experience is lacking in Australian museums. Archaeological assemblages such as the privy deposit are important for Australia's museums, in their potential to broaden public perceptions about penal history, away from the 'ball and chain' theme, towards a greater public understanding of convict life, and the convict contribution to national heritage.

Fiona Starr

Butchering Bones at Pyrmont

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the inner suburb of Pyrmont in Sydney underwent a massive population explosion. Industrialisation of the colony was perhaps one of the many reasons that explains this expansion. For instance at Pyrmont The Colonial Sugar Refinery was one of the main industries along with Iron works and sandstone quarrying. As a direct consequence of these developments the suburb became mainly the living

area of the working class associated with the local industries. Can the underfloor faunal deposits of four Pymont terraces reflect any of these social and economic circumstances? Or perhaps tell a different story, how many different stories? This thesis will look at butchery patterns in order to address this question.

Carlos Torres

DIARY NOTES

Now is the time to start organising your frequent flyer points for forthcoming ASHA conferences:

1998	Sydney
1999	Bendigo
2000	Adelaide
2001	Canberra
2002	Nelson

ASHA NEWS

Annual General Meeting 1997 President's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present this report to an annual general meeting at only the second conference to be held in New Zealand out of the total of seventeen which have now been organised by the Society since 1981. The last twelve months have in general been a successful period for the Society, although not without problems. It is gradually becoming apparent that we are also in a time of change but one from which the Society will hopefully emerge as a larger and stronger organisation.

The most noted success of the last twelve months has been the publication of two more issues of the Journal, so that a total of three were published between September last year and July this year. At long last this has brought us up to date, after falling behind since the beginning of the decade. At present the 1997 issue is in an advanced stage of preparation for printing and should appear early next year, by which time we hope to be able to meet the costs involved. At the same time we have continued to produce the *Newsletter* at a rate of four issues a year. None of this would have been possible without the help of a number of people, not all of whom can be mentioned by name here. However, I would particularly like to thank Peter Bell, Susan Lawrence and Tony Lowe for their editorial work and the members of the Editorial Committee for their very substantial contribution of time. As always I have to single out Ilma Powell who, as for many years past, has continued to see that the many detailed matters arising from our publications program are dealt with speedily and efficiently. We hope to continue to rotate the editorship of the Journal and Neville Ritchie has promised to undertake the task for the 1998 issue, so I hope we will see a substantial New Zealand content in that

one. We have also continued our policy of moving the editorship of the *Newsletter* from place to place, so that not only is the workload spread more evenly but we are also able to tap more easily into the news of the different regions concerned.

As I have explained in the most recent issue of the *Newsletter*, our successes, particularly in catching up on the journal backlog, have involved us in quite heavy expenditure. This has been sufficient to remind us that our subscription has been static for ten years or so, that some of our members are singularly slow payers, and that we could do with many more than the less than 300 members that we currently have. As will be proposed later on in this meeting, it is now essential that we increase the subscription if we are to continue to meet our commitments and, indeed, to further develop our activities. Amongst those activities over the last year, we have continued to hold a Sydney meeting with a speaker every three months from February to November. The Society's committee has also met on each of these occasions, before the general meeting. With regret, I have to record that these general meetings have not been well attended, although they are, of course, open to all members and their guests. Part of the problem has been finding a satisfactory venue that was not too expensive, for in this wonderful age of user-pays no institution is now willing to donate its facilities as was so often the case in the past. Part of the problem has also been our undoubtedly poor advertising, but that also costs money of course. Hopefully we will struggle on with these meetings, however in the belief that the Society must provide occasions other than the Annual Conference when its members can meet and exchange news and ideas, as well as listening to somebody else talking about their recent work.

Since its beginning over a quarter of a century ago, this Society has remained centred on Sydney, and indeed both its post box number and the crest on its letterhead still betray its Sydney University origins. For a long time now some of us have sought ways of lifting the Society to a national and international level. My foundation of the Journal in the early 1980s was done with this in mind, and in recent years several attempts have been made to give the Committee that runs the Society a broader base. These efforts will be continued in the coming year. Both Judy Birmingham and Ilma Powell are standing down as Vice-Presidents and will be replaced by Neville Ritchie and Susan Lawrence, who have been nominated unopposed for those positions. This will mean that the Society has one Vice-President in New Zealand and one in Melbourne.

After five years as President I am also standing down, as I always said that I would (if I survived this long) and Aedeon Cremin is nominated unopposed as the new President, so that our historical links with Sydney University will be maintained a little longer.

Both Ilma Powell (from Sydney) and myself (from Canberra) have nominated to remain on the