

Historical Archaeology and the Historian

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The archaeology of an historic site is meaningless without history; and the history of such a site is impoverished without archaeology. In the context of Australia since 1788, the paper examines some reasons why relations between the complementary disciplines are often less than ideal. It looks at case histories of sites in New South Wales outside the Sydney metropolitan area, examining the degree to which archaeology supplies vital evidence rather than data merely supporting or illustrating documentary sources. It emphasises the particular value of archaeology in assisting the historic documentation of less visible, less articulate people of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the Overseas Chinese, and asks for more constructive two-way co-operation between archaeologists and historians.

The impact of history on historical archaeology is inescapable. During the heated debate in 1972 which preceded the approval of Historical Archaeology as a University of Sydney course, Alexander Cambitoglou claimed the site of Torone for historical archaeology because he had begun the excavations by reading Thucydides. The distinction between Torone and, say, Cumberland Street in The Rocks, is one of balance between conventional historical documentation and evidence supplied by archaeological recording or excavation. Every practitioner working on European sites in Australia is aware that the archaeology is inseparable from the history, but the interdisciplinary potential of historical archaeology remains unfulfilled.

The reasons for this regrettable unfulfilment are, of course, embedded in the disciplinary approach of both archaeologists and historians; and this basic conceptual incomprehension is exacerbated by the need for consultants in both fields to make a living. A corollary of all this is that, if the profession of historical archaeology has not attained a consistent image of itself, neither the wider public nor the bodies in central or local government who commission much of the work done can have a clear notion of the technical skills and contextual knowledge required.

These problems of sympathetic comprehension are most acute in a very modern context. They do not seem problems at all in medieval European archaeology. Most medieval historians are aware of the evidential value of castles, ecclesiastical buildings, town-plans and artefacts. Many, like me, became professional medievalists because of the impact of surviving structures and landscapes. As a result, wherever physical evidence is relevant, medieval historians take account of archaeological work, regularly liaise with archaeologists and contribute to archaeological reports. This is explained in part by the relative paucity of documentary evidence and the relative abundance of archaeological material. It is also partly explained by the wealth of museum holdings. The Sutton Hoo treasure in the British Museum grips everyone who sees it by its aesthetic and technical qualities and simultaneously revolutionises understanding of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon society. Or, to take a smaller local institution, the Roskilde Museum of Viking ships has enlarged every historian's view of the mixed commercial-raiding-fishing-farming world of medieval Scandinavia. No one can write of Dark Age trade without detailed knowledge of the ceramic evidence and what archaeologists have done with stratified deposits; no one should write of late medieval trade without a similar familiarity with excavated imported wares. The shift inside the

millennium of the Middle Ages is instructive: in the early period historians are far more pervasively aware of archaeology but in the later, better documented, period the physical evidence becomes much more an illustrative adjunct. Edward I's castles in Wales and Scotland, for example, are photographed endlessly and appear in most relevant books, but the historian's preoccupation is with the superb series of royal accounts detailing the building of these castles or with the political context of their creation and even the books specifically on castles utilise architects' ground-plans more successfully than archaeologists' reports. Great exhibitions around late medieval themes, such as the Age of Chivalry mounted in London in 1987, may produce sumptuous and scholarly catalogues and through the sheer splendour of the objects may evoke intense public admiration, but most of the objects are archival, artistic or architectural and the role of the archaeologist is characteristically muted.¹

The historians' marginalisation of the archaeologist has become more marked in the modern period as the balance of primary evidence for most fields of enquiry has tilted ever more heavily towards the documentary. Most teachers of Australian history in the period since European settlement have had very little exposure to the use of non-documentary sources. Hardly any Australian historians teaching in the universities subscribe to the *Australasian Journal of Historical Archaeology* and few read it regularly in libraries. As a result, except by personal contacts, whether academic, social or in paid consultancies, the historians are not very aware of what is being done in Australian historical archaeology. In the great Age of Macquarie exhibition, held at Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney in 1992, the nearest Australian colonial equivalent to London's Age of Chivalry exhibition, there was not a single archaeologically retrieved artefact, and the curators, an architect and an historian, invited no archaeologist to contribute to the accompanying book.²

Despite two decades of accelerating activity in recording or excavating European sites in Australia, the archaeologists have failed to make sufficient impression on the academy. Nor have they made a deep impression on many local historical societies and local museum displays. There are a number of reasons for this, which weigh differently in different contexts. Two instances, both from the Hawkesbury, are very revealing.

The important sites above Wisemans Ferry where convict gangs building the Great North Road were housed between 1827 and 1832 have become well known in the pages of this journal.³ But the pioneering work identifying and first recording the sites by members of Hawkesbury Historical

Society in 1979-80 has been effectively ignored and the artefacts identified then, including a cache of 1826 pennies, have not attracted the attention they warrant.⁴ Such apparent lack of interest has often discouraged local historians from close co-operation with either professional historians or archaeologists. Since local knowledge, especially on country sites, usually plays an essential role in any archaeological work and interpretation, the widespread apprehension that local initiatives have been undervalued by academics and consultants needs to be taken seriously and remedied.

A second reason for the general lack of local impact is the close relation between historical archaeology and heritage. Heritage studies, usually jointly funded by the Department of Planning and local councils in New South Wales, normally identify archaeological sites both above ground and below, although there is a continuing uncertainty about the definition of an archaeological site. Historians and archaeologists who do this sort of consultancy usually have articulate views about heritage values. These views are often not shared by local historians, who may have a different perspective. On the Hawkesbury, the dichotomy between a keen awareness of local history and the need to retain and manage heritage sites, was very marked during the long ascendancy of Doug Bowd, the *eminence grise* of Hawkesbury Historical Society until his death in 1993. Bowd, the author of two standard histories of the area, was adamantly opposed to the preservation of many worthwhile colonial buildings in Windsor and those of us involved in issues such as the saving of Oxalis Cottage in George Street in 1979-80 remember well the vigour of Bowd's wish to see its demolition.⁵ Bowd was not alone in failing to recognise the evidential value of historic buildings or archaeological sites and, like many academic historians, saw history too exclusively as a library discipline.

Part of this occasional tension is attributable simply to the fact that almost all historical archaeologists are city-based, whether it be Melbourne, Canberra or Sydney. By definition they are foreigners in a close-knit local-historical community and, as heritage study groups have found from Wingecarribee to Hastings, from Orange to the North-West Sector of Sydney, tact and finesse are required in establishing the essential collaboration with local historians. The same considerations of diplomacy are needed between consultant historians and consultant archaeologists working on the same study, be it the excavation of Cumberland Street in The Rocks or a heritage study of Tallaganda.

The debate over Grace Karskens' five research questions developed for the Cumberland Street excavation has been very revealing of potential tensions between archaeologists and historians. Though she has a degree in historical archaeology, Grace is primarily a historian, completing a doctoral thesis on the early history of The Rocks. These five questions might be perceived by some archaeologists as being historical questions:

1. How do peoples' habits and lifestyles change from the essentially pre-industrial 1790s to the more modern industrial society of the turn of the century?
2. What can the site tell about women's roles on the site?
3. Was the Rocks a terrible slum or were the people really quite well off?
4. Was the Rocks a separate community from the rest of Sydney?
5. What was the influence of Government on people's lives in The Rocks?⁶

But they are not exclusively historical questions. They probe into the material culture revealed by this major excavation. They are good contextual questions which allow the site to contribute something of importance not just to the history of The Rocks but also to the development of nineteenth-century Sydney. Moreover, they are skilfully designed to encourage intelligent interest in visitors to the site, not least the successful program of visits from school-children. They may not address the cutting edge of archaeological theory or artefact analysis

but they are not intended for that purpose. The Karskens questions explain to a wider public that archaeology is contributing something of evidential value in understanding both historical processes and local particularities. The question sheet is good public relations and good history. Is it not also good historical archaeology?

It should, however, be conceded that historical archaeology is most useful to historical understanding in the context of a single, puzzling, insufficiently documented site and in the study of the most anonymous sectors of society.

The recent excavation by Denis Gojak in Cattai National Park is an excellent example of the puzzling site elucidated uniquely by archaeology. The stone tower windmill built by Thomas Arndell by 1809 is reasonably well known because it is the earliest surviving industrial site visible above ground in Australia.⁷ But the granary nearby and stone foundations 500 metres away implausibly known as the 'miller's cottage' have received little attention. There is no documentary evidence at all relating to these two structures and the Gojak excavation has provided critical evaluative data for each. The cottage, which is much too far away for a windmill, proves to be a substantial house with a large area of stone-paved floor and two chimneys, dating from the middle years of the nineteenth century and therefore almost certainly an ancillary farmhouse at the extreme north end of Arndell's 240 hectares.

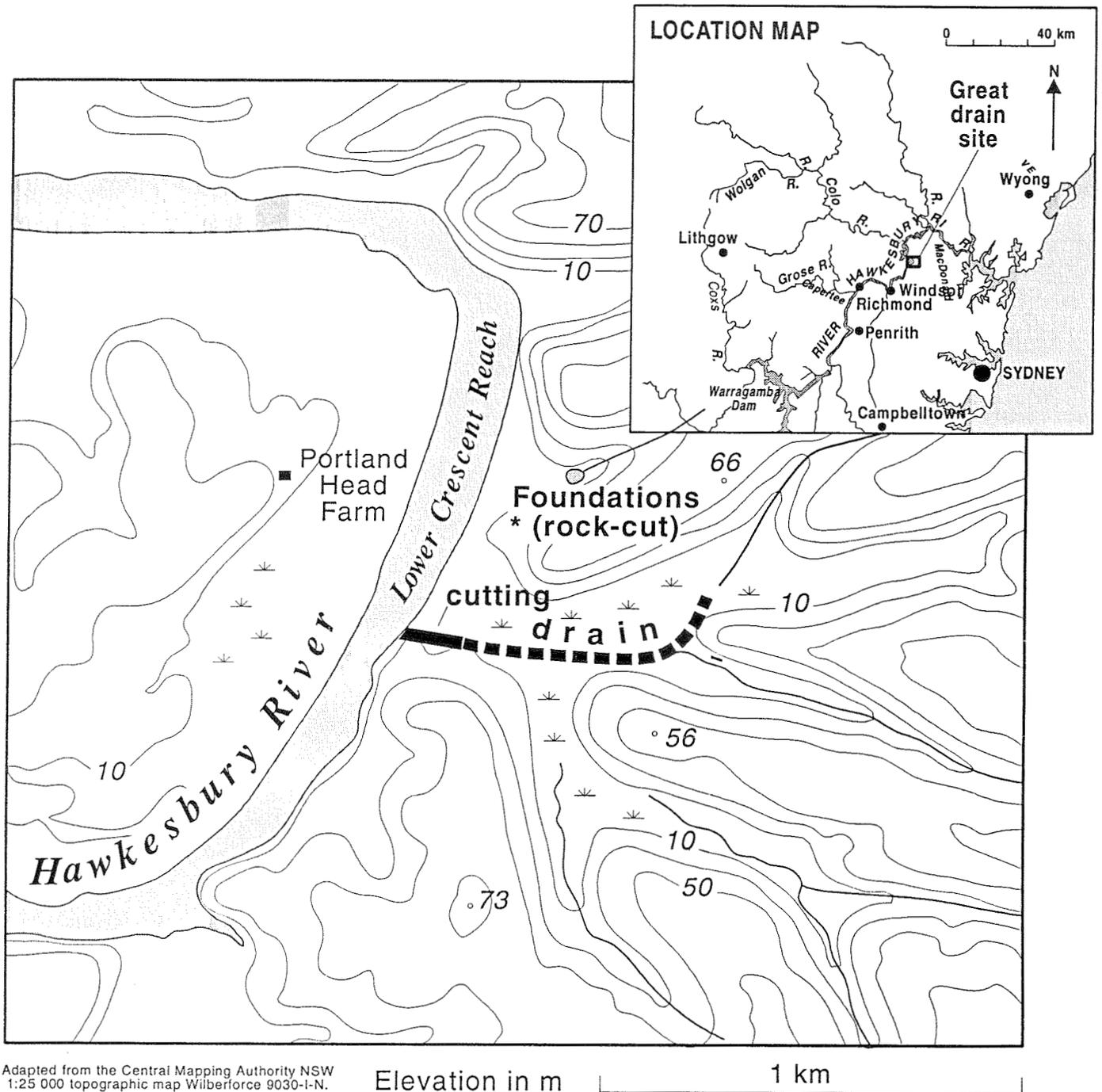
The granary, built at the same time as the windmill before 1809, has now been demonstrated to have two rooms of unequal size. The larger was presumably for storing bagged flour or grain. The smaller has a chimney flue, but no evidence whatever of any fire ever lit in the hearth. The attractive explanation is that the room was used for drying grain, with a brazier to raise the temperature and the flue to enhance the draught. The perforated brick found in the rubble around the windmill suggests that the floor of this drying room was paved with such bricks as was done in Britain.⁸

Two other related examples, not far away from Cattai, on the Hawkesbury at South Maroota, where physical evidence fills a gap, are the Great Drain and the rock-cut house footings on what is now Pacific Park Ski Lodge (Fig. 1). Together these sites give an invaluable dimension to the study of early farming on the pockets of arable, alluvial land which lie along the lower Hawkesbury and, throughout the nineteenth century, were accessible only by water.

The first grant of this land, portion 10, Maroota parish, was made on 1 January 1810 to Samuel Carr. Carr was not, however, the first occupier of the swampy grazing land, for it was already known as Williams' Farm.⁹ The only man called Williams known to have lived along the Hawkesbury before 1810 is Charles Williams (c. 1763-1815), a convict first-fleeter, who farmed first at Prospect, and then, after losing his farm through inebriety, became James Rouse's neighbour at Pitt Town Bottoms in 1794, occupying lot 7.¹⁰ Williams lost this farm also some time before 1814 and may have occupied the land at South Maroota informally before 1810 when it was granted to Carr.

Williams' Farm was the name given to the 12-hectare property in Carr's grant. The north-south boundaries of the grant were defined as 'rocks including a creek running from the lagoon at the back.'¹¹ The lagoon is now swamp and there are difficulties in identifying the creek either on the ground or on the current 1:25000 map (Wilberforce 9030-I-N).

On 18 March 1813 Carr leased his farm to George Cox, possibly the teenage son of William Cox of Clarendon. Carr was to supply his tenant with grain or pigs.¹² What happened when Cox's lease expired in 1815 is not known: in particular, Carr's place of residence is not clear. Someone, however, built 'houses etc.' on the property before 1819. Since the house was known as Collingwood Cottage, someone by that name (not yet identified) is likely to have been an occupant for at least part of the period 1815 to 1819.¹³ Collingwood Cottage is possibly the first proper house built on Carr's grant and Williams' farm,



Adapted from the Central Mapping Authority NSW
1:25 000 topographic map Wilberforce 9030-I-N.

Elevation in m

1 km

Fig. 1: Location map of the Great Drain and the rock-cut house foundations on Pacific Park Ski Lodge, South Maroota on the banks of the Hawkesbury River. (R.I. Jack and University of Sydney Cartography)

and the rock-cut foundations can best be related to this Macquarie-period house.

The house floor was created by artificially levelling an outcrop of rock near the river but above the level of medium floods (Fig. 2). Two rooms look west to the river over a verandah of well-cut rock. On the north end of the north room there are the rock-cut bases of a fireplace and oven (Fig. 3). Worn stone thresholds mark the two doorways into the house, facing each other at the south-east and south-west corners of the north room. Each threshold is flanked by square post-holes cut in the rock and there are three more postholes along the line of the dividing wall between the two rooms. If one regards the area between the doors as a through passage, the north room has dimensions of 3.6 metres square, the same as the south room.

A third room probably existed as an easterly extension of the south room, some 2.8 by 3.6 metres, but only the east wall is

visible because of grass. The house was probably L-shaped, therefore, and was fairly minimal. On the other hand, a great deal of trouble was taken over the foundations and an elegant stone embankment (now engulfed by a large fig-tree) was constructed to support the western verandah area.

In 1819 the farm passed to George Hall of Bungool who gave it to his daughter Mary on her marriage to William Johnston in that year. Johnston's father, Andrew, lived immediately opposite at Portland Head Farm, which still exists and is visible from the house foundations. William and Mary spent the first decade of their marriage on Williams' Farm. Their first six children were born in Collingwood Cottage: Mary in 1821, the twins Jane and James in 1823, Elizabeth in 1825, William in 1828 and Hannah in 1830.¹⁴ Presumably the accommodation was enlarged or supplemented as the family grew. Certainly the property grew. Grants and purchases of the adjacent inland portions 9, 15, 22 and 24 enlarged the farm to 88 hectares.¹⁵

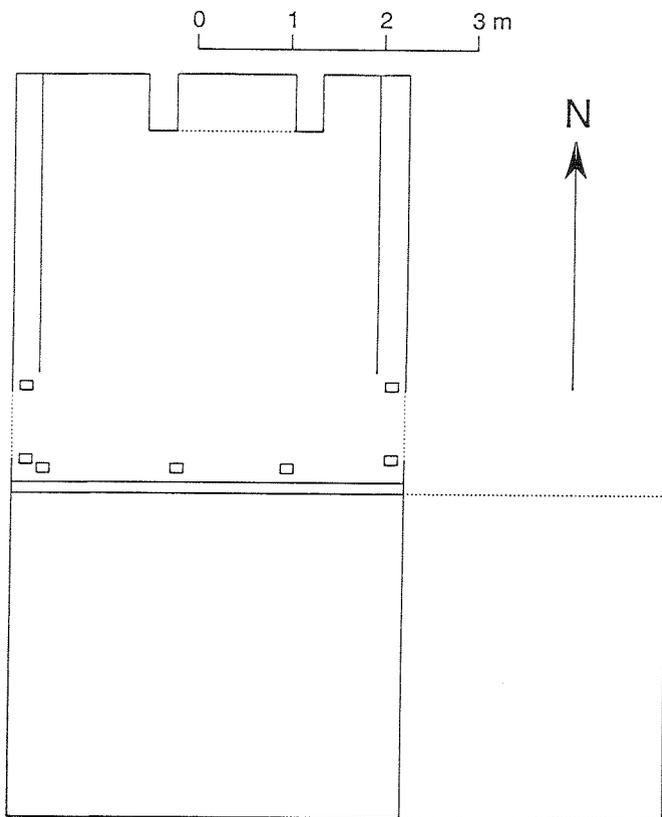


Fig. 2: Plan of the foundations, cut out of bedrock, for 'Collingwood Cottage' built in the Macquarie period on what is now Pacific Park Ski Lodge, South Maroota. Because the site is partly obscured by modern equipment and plant growth the plan is only approximate. (R.I. Jack and University of Sydney Cartography)

The Johnstons lived on the farm from 1819 until 1831 when they moved to the Blighton Arms in Pitt Town. They do not seem to have returned to Maroota.¹⁶ The subsequent occupancy of the farm is not known. Perhaps it remained in Johnston hands, for the first grant of portion 8, which adjoined the farm on the south with a water frontage, was made to James Henry Johnston in 1873.¹⁷ James Henry was the seventh son of William and, like his father, married a Mary Hall.¹⁸ The present owner, Gordon Johnston, however, obtained the main farm in 1956 by purchase, not inheritance, and a title-search has not been undertaken.

A slab cottage remained on or near the rock foundations and was still occupied in the 1930s. The property was still dependent on water access and only in about 1960 when George Johnston used a bulldozer was a track from the Wisemans Ferry road created, the present access to Pacific Park Ski Lodge.¹⁹

What of the Great Drain? The rock-cutting runs east-west from the high bank of the Hawkesbury until it meets the swampy interior flat land. The rock-cut section is impressive: 70 metres long, 6.5 metres deep and 2.3 metres across at the top (Fig. 4). Gunpowder was used in excavating the sandstone: there are numerous drill holes at various levels, all quite short and consistent with an early date. There is also a great deal of pickwork. At the base the drain narrows abruptly, creating a useful toe-hold ledge on either side so that one can walk along, legs splayed, above the normal level of water going out from the swamp or coming in with the tide. To avoid tidal or flood waters entering, a sluice gate was installed half-way, at the deepest part of the cutting. There is now a modern concrete sluice, 5.5 metres high, with a metal gate in the base, but just to the east there are joist holes cut in the rock face, one near the top and another near the bottom, which clearly held the joists of an earlier sluice.

Beyond the rock-cutting, the drain is excavated into the soil of the swamp. It goes eastwards right down the paddock for about 600 metres, then swings north through heavy clay to end in the side gully some 700 metres from the river.



Fig. 3: 'Collingwood Cottage': a worn stone threshold is on the front right, the footings of the fireplace and oven are at central rear. (R.I. Jack 1983)

Drainage must always have been a problem in this low-lying land fed with run-off from the hills and two gullies. There is another short drainage channel running for some 200 metres on the north side of the grazing paddock (which has been artificially raised by the dumping of thousands of car tyres by Gordon Johnston). This short channel cuts through a low earth bank separating the front paddock from the back gully to the north-east.

There is no reason to think that the second channel is of any antiquity, but the Great Drain is almost certainly early. The likeliest date is during the active occupancy of William and Mary Johnston during the period 1819 to 1831. The 1820s were the first decade in which serious inundations, which had culminated in the 14-metre flood of February 1819, ceased to be a major problem on the lower Hawkesbury.²⁰ The Johnston family had good stonemasons on hand: Andrew Johnston's assigned servant had two stonemason brothers, William Barren and William Harvey, who are supposed to have built both his house and Ebenezer Church, possibly also James Mein's house near Andrew Johnston's and the Turnbull house at Port Erringhi.²¹ It is very tempting to see these experienced workers in stone being put to work to excavate the Great Drain. But then it is also tempting to attribute the remarkable house foundations to them. Since these men seem to have been available through Andrew Johnston there is no necessary impediment to dating the foundations to the 1810s and the drain to the 1820s. The identity of the masons is speculative: whoever the workmen were, the Great Drain is one of the most dramatic and unexpected heritage places the length and breadth of the Hawkesbury. And the Great Drain is its own documentation.

The role of the physical evidence is crucial in interpreting the development of the property on which both the rock-cut foundations and the Great Drain were cut more than 170 years ago. The archaeological evidence uniquely demonstrates both the challenges faced by early agriculture on a low-lying river-flat and the successful strategy adopted to overcome the problems both of too much water and too little. It also shows uniquely the versatility of stonemasons in this isolated community. The role of skilled workers in stone did not end with the shaping of blocks for the fine stone buildings of the very early Hawkesbury and an archaeological perspective is valuable in seeing evidence beyond the architectural. But the drain and the house foundations would be inscrutable without the historical context of land use, land ownership and patterns of flooding during the thirty years after river settlement began in 1794. Only in this context can plausible dates, human strategies be added to the physical remains to establish a valuable antidote to simplistic and dismissive interpretations of early Hawkesbury settlements.

The other area in which the special value of historical archaeology should be more widely recognised is in the

lifestyles of the underprivileged, who are little more than names, if even that, in conventional documentation: people like the sempstresses whose sweat-shop accommodation was still vividly legible when Rosemary Annable did the historical archaeology on the Gasworks site in Pitt Street, Sydney, or people like the Chinese of the Haymarket or The Rocks whom John Sands censored out of the city directories in the 1880s and 1890s.²²

Since 1883 the Statue of Liberty has welcomed immigrants to the eastern seaboard of America:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breath free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.*²³

Emma Lazarus' poem should be a text over the bed of every historical archaeologist, for, just as America welcomed the anonymous immigrants, so the archaeologist can supply an alternative documentation of these huddled masses through their wretched refuse on the teeming shore of another immigrant country.

The overseas Chinese provide excellent examples of the power of archaeology to expand historical horizons. There are two standard secondary works about the Chinese in Australia, by C.Y. Choi and C.F. Yong.

The topics covered by C.Y. Choi in his book about Chinese settlement in Australia are, however, singularly restricted.²⁴ The whole of migration from south China up to 1947 is disposed of in 54 small pages dominated by statistics and legislation. The Chinese context, both governmental and social, is deftly portrayed, and the trades adopted by emigré Chinese in Australia are analysed largely from census returns. As well as words in a book 120 pages long there are 24 statistical tables and four distribution maps. There are no photographs, just as there are hardly any individuals in the text.

Yong's book published two years after Choi's, in 1977, but originally written as a thesis in 1963, deals only with 20 years in Chinese Australian history, from 1901 to 1921, and is twice the length of Choi's overview.²⁵ The content is then much fuller and individuals can make their presence felt, but the same historical preoccupations are evident: the nature of Chinese immigration, the economic activities of Chinese in Australia in these two decades, a very long section on the political involvement of Australian Chinese in China's stressful problems; and finally a short section on social life, including religion, education and morality. Like Choi, Yong loved statistical tables and has 22 of them. Reflecting the greater intimacy of approach however, Yong allowed himself 25 illustrations, 15 of which were people, either in individual portraits (12) or in groups (3). Illustrations of essential social centres such as joss-houses or gaming places were entirely taken from unidentified journals published between 1875 and 1880. (In general, historians' attitude towards attribution of visual evidence is extraordinarily cavalier compared with their respect towards documentary sources.)

These two books, which are still necessary reading for undergraduates, reflect some of the blinkers which many Australian historians wear without apparent discomfort. Nor are these merely Australian blinkers. When the South Seas Society held a conference in Singapore ten years ago, in 1984, on 'Early Chinese Migration to Southeast Asia and America' exactly the same topics dominated both the discussion and the subsequent book, edited by Lee Lai To in 1988.²⁶ Political, legal and economic questions make up the agenda, with the usual look at social life which means clan organisation and secret societies. The most innovative chapter in the book, Eve Armentrout Ma on the social organisation of Chinatowns in the USA and Hawaii in the 1890s, was not in fact part of the original conference at all and in any case concentrates on trades, triads and tongs.²⁷ That is to say, it reflects very closely all the themes of the rest of the conference (not to mention Choi and Yong, who were absent), as these themes are marked out in the more restricted geographical context of a Chinatown.

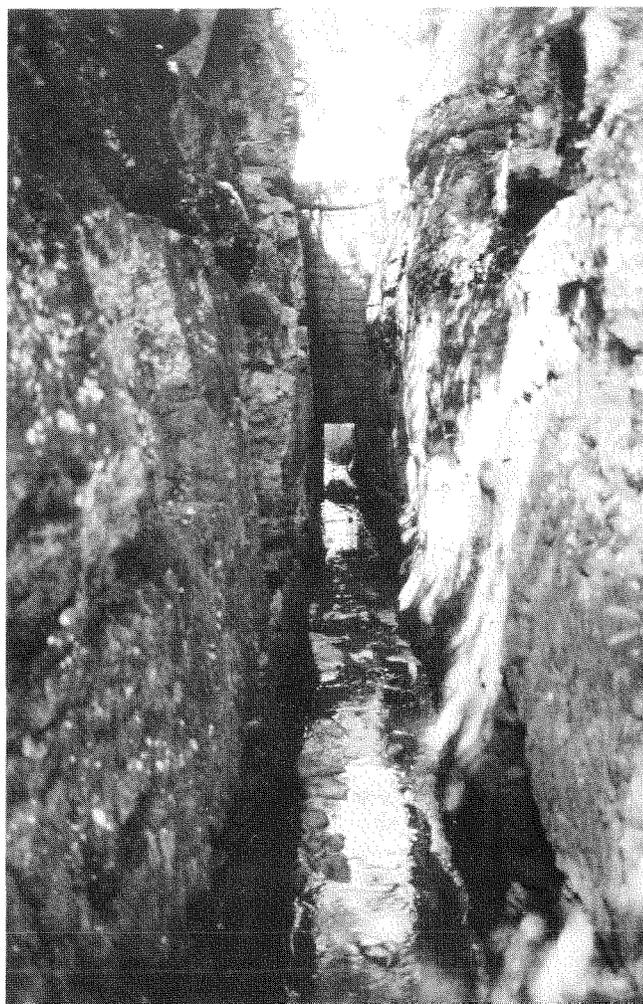


Fig. 4: The Great Drain on Pacific Park Ski Lodge, South Maroota, cut through 6.5 metres of Hawkesbury sandstone in, probably, the 1820s. The view is from the exit to the Hawkesbury River looking east to the sluiceway. (R.I. Jack 1993)

But what a Chinatown looked like, what distinguished it from a European-American mining town or country town, how the spatial characteristics reflect Chinese needs and preconceptions and in turn modified them, such questions are ignored. In the whole volume edited by Lee Lai To there are no photographs, only one map showing the census divisions of Singapore in 1901 and the usual spatter of tabulated statistics. Just in the section on Chinatowns, a geographer, an archaeologist, even an architect, would have posed much more interesting questions about the urban topography, the use of *feng-shui* for alignments and the relationship of the Chinatown to any neighbouring European settlement or city. In an impressive American study of the Chinese in the Monterey Bay area south of San Francisco, there are lengthy treatments of Chinatowns in Monterey, Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Salinas and Castroville. These studies make excellent use of the available Sanborn Map Company's detailed house-by-house plans, made for fire insurance purposes. Mr Lydon prints modernised versions of these maps to cast a great deal of light on the social topography of these Californian Chinatowns: but he does not consider geomancy at all and displays little interest in the reasons for the urban design.²⁸

Such questions, and many more, are by contrast routinely put by historical archaeologists. Fred Mueller, for example, has studied the layout of a number of Californian Chinatowns, using similar fire insurance maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He then applied to these town plans the principle of *feng-shui* to test whether the principles of geomancy, harmonising urban life with nature, had been applied by the Chinese settlers at towns like Riverside.²⁹

It is far more difficult to test these very interesting questions

about the extent to which geomancy was relevant to the Chinese peasant who had become an Australian or New Zealand or Californian gold seeker when he (they were all male) raised a simple, vernacular hut in a less urbanised context. No fire insurance maps or government surveys regularly supply information about house orientation for the massive number of Chinese not living in an established Chinatown. Neville Ritchie, the New Zealand archaeologist, has taken such questions by the nape of the neck and worried them extensively, first in his vast PhD thesis of 1986, in 5 reports and in 13 subsequent articles.³⁰ One of Ritchie's studies which is an object lesson to blinkered historians is published in Priscilla Wegars' recent collection.³¹ This article is called 'Form and Adaptation' (archaeologists, like historians, often use meaningless titles which require a lengthy sub-title, in this case 'Nineteenth Century Chinese Miners' Dwellings in Southern New Zealand'). This remarkable study of miners' housing both isolated and in small Chinatowns explores *feng-shui* in a highly sophisticated way, attempting to distinguish necessary local conditions (such as prevailing wind or water supply) from geomantic desiderata. Many geomantic preferences were consistently met - e.g. rectangular shape of huts or siting at confluence of waterways and on locations backing on to rising ground. The Chinese also believed that straight lines in groups of buildings were a shade dangerous because bad spirits could whizz along the straight pathways and do undesirable things: in New Zealand the Presbyterian minister, Alexander Don, missionary to the Chinese miners, noted in 1908 that the 21 houses at Chinatown 'are nearly all set at different angles, built of different materials, and are of different sizes' and attributes this directly to *feng shui*, but normally one lacks interested and articulate Presbyterians to preserve such details in documentary form.³² Then the field work of someone like Neville Ritchie identifying and recording the sites, orientations and physical contexts of Chinese houses in the Clutha district of the South Island becomes the only source of evidence.

Such an archaeological survey is important in itself: even more importantly, it encourages many new questions. Ritchie, for example, has compared the peasant houses in South China, specifically in Guangzhou, which were largely made of bricks, particularly adobe bricks, with the large number of huts which he has personally recorded in Central Otago.³³ And, although various forms of earth construction (both brick and rammed earth) were preferred in New Zealand as in Guangzhou, there is a great deal of local variation and adaptation to suit single male life, a frontier society and a different climate. Ritchie concludes, moreover, that 'architectural character was defined by function rather than style or strong vernacular influences'.³⁴ As ever, the survival rate of the physical evidence is skewed by the nature of the materials — stone survives where timber and clay disappear — but the point is that a whole dimension of detailed information about the living space and cultural preoccupations of these Chinese sojourners immediately becomes available to those historians who are prepared to go beyond documentary sources.

Archaeology, by excavating around Chinese settlements, has, moreover, uncovered a wealth of information about food consumed, about butchering practices, about ceramic vessels used for consuming food, about leisure activities such as mah jongg or gaming or opium-smoking: and all these various detailed elements of the artefactual record lead on to extremely important and more conventional questions about trading connections, about the extent of importation of certain food from China or elsewhere and in turn to questions about degrees of acculturation. The study of artefacts recovered in a controlled archaeological investigation as opposed to the museum items in say Cooktown Museum or the Chinese Australian Museum in Melbourne can be extraordinarily rewarding, though also frustrating and partial. There are now some useful published archaeological studies. Andrew Piper

has given an illuminating paper on the way Chinese miners in New Zealand adjusted their traditional diet to include more mutton in a country seriously over-run by sheep.³⁵ The archaeological evidence for this mutton-eating at the expense of traditional pork gives an important slant on acculturation which Dr Ng's historical data cannot produce.³⁶ Justin McCarthy's comments on the more traditional diet eaten on Chinese dishes by Chinese miners at Pine Creek in the Northern Territory are a necessary caution to extrapolating too many generalisations from Piper's New Zealand conclusions.³⁷

All these archaeological studies use documentary materials as well: the archaeologists are better at using historical data than the historians are at assimilating archaeological reports, though I do not think most archaeologists are particularly good at creating a sophisticated historical context. It is very striking to read Cathie May's excellent historical study of the Chinese in Cairns from 1870 to 1920 (published in 1984 under the classically meaningless title of *Topsawyers*).³⁸ This book makes a very cogent case for taking a single locality in real depth and looking, as Brian Dalton says in his foreword, at 'the actions of, rather than reactions to, the Chinese'.³⁹ But the sources used are documentary and oral: there is no attempt to take advantage of the limited area studied to examine sites, including the agricultural fields, with an archaeological eye. Different questions can be addressed when the researcher undertakes fieldwork as Helen Vivian did in 1983-4 for Chinese tin-mining in North Tasmania or my team did in 1982 for Chinese irrigation systems on a remote market-garden on Cape York peninsula.⁴⁰ In 1993, at the Melbourne conference on Chinese in Australia I gave a paper discussing the design of gravemarkers and burners in overseas Chinese cemeteries, a topic entirely uninformed by historical or archaeological literature: this interim report pointed up the way in which the horseshoe graves of South China were exported throughout South-East Asia (Fig. 5), but not adopted for nineteenth-century Chinese men separated from their families in Australasia (Fig. 6) or California (Fig. 7) nor for twentieth-century Chinese men and women buried by their families in these new countries.⁴¹ This is a matter of observable record which can be documented only by the physical remains: but these gravemarkers do not tell us why the differences occurred. Archaeology does not necessarily answer all the questions, but it poses quite new ones, it forces us to think in a new way and, as a comparative discipline above all, obliges us to think more laterally. The irrigation system of Ah Toy on the Palmer River led me to the Portuguese peasant water strategies in Vinhais just as an earlier study of water-powered cloth-mills in medieval Wales had led me to water-powered flour-mills in New South Wales and then to Chinese irrigation.⁴² What one needs most of all is curiosity. The curiosity of archaeologists working on Chinese sites is something which historians should be encouraged to share.

But curiosity has to be accompanied by some honest hard work, preferably funded by major grant-giving bodies as well as by unwilling mining companies. The survey of Chinese sites in Australia, now funded by the Heritage Commission as a three-year project under the general supervision of Paul Macgregor, will bring together a corpus of information which is long overdue: just as the admirable bibliography of the archaeology of the overseas Chinese in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea published in 1993 by Peter Bell, Gordon Grimwade and Neville Ritchie has filled a substantial hiatus.⁴³ An analysis of the 200 items in the Bell/Grimwade/Ritchie bibliography is, however, revealing. Only about 65% of the items are in even a broad sense archaeological: of the 130 items which arise from archaeological excavation or survey or which turn around physical evidence, 79 are essentially unpublished reports for clients so are not ideally available to other scholars. Likewise the 34 undergraduate or postgraduate theses have limited accessibility.

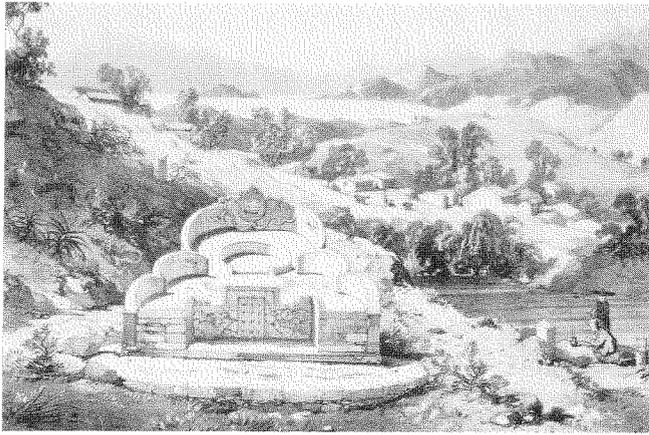


Fig. 5: Chinese gravemarker in Hong Kong drawn on site c. 1840 by Auguste Borget. Borget 1842: plate 16, 'Tombeau et village entre les baies de Hong-Kong et Cow-Loon'.



Fig. 7: Rectangular concrete gravemarker in Chinese cemetery in Auburn, California. (R.I. Jack 1986)



Fig. 6: Overseas Chinese gravemarker, one of the array of nineteenth century rectangular granite blocks at Beechworth cemetery in Victoria. (R.I. Jack 1993)

Publications in the public domain number only 51 (32 for Australia, 19 for New Zealand — and 13 of the 19 New Zealand articles are by Neville Ritchie): 18 out of the 32 Australian publications are, moreover, on joss houses. So out of a bibliography of 200 items, only about 14 are archaeological articles on Australian-Chinese topics other than joss-houses. These figures will be greatly boosted by the publication of the papers presented at the Melbourne conference of 1993 held at the Chinese Australian Museum, and future work will be much better founded by the Bell/Grimwade/Ritchie bibliography now available and by the

National Estate funded survey of Chinese sites due to be completed by 1997.

Significant research questions can then be framed with more confidence and more comparative information than at present. The archaeological report which has so often been commissioned as an emergency assessment of a site threatened by massively funded mining development is, of course, very useful, but the Chinese archaeological record in Australia is of international importance. Peter Bell's work on Chinese ovens and my own on Chinese burial practices in Australia have aroused considerable interest in the United States.⁴⁴ These and other topics such as Chinatowns, housing materials, geomancy, canned food, comparison of early and later waves of Chinese in Australia and the largely neglected question of the material world of Chinese women here, all these deserve much more systematic research.

Archaeology of the nineteenth and twentieth century plays an essential role in documenting the poor, the illiterate, the anonymous, the oppressed, the people whom written records ignore as people, the folk omitted from street directories, those who are only number-fodder for the impersonal statistical table. Only a genuine co-operation between archaeologists and historians can restore life and individuality to those whom European society in Australia failed to recognise as individuals.

NOTES

1. Alexander and Binski 1987.
2. Broadbent and Hughes 1992; Historic Houses Trust of NSW 1992.
3. Karskens 1984:17-26; Karskens 1986:17-28.
4. Stenning 1980:8-9. This original publication of the site is acknowledged, with a brief list of the artefacts noted on the site in 1979-80, only in a footnote in Karskens 1984:26 note 41.
5. Bowd 1973; Bowd 1986; Windsor and Richmond Gazette, 23, 30 May 1979; 27 February 1980.
6. 'The Last of the Big Digs' 1994:1; Karskens 1994:2.
7. Jack 1983:37.
8. 'Recent Archaeological Work at Cattai National Park' 1994:2; Loudon 1869:591, fig. 1135 (perforated bricks for the floor of a heated malt-kiln).
9. Registrar General, Original Grants, ser. 5 p. 205.
10. Hardy 1985:215-6; Bowd 1973:5-6; Jack 1990:66-7.
11. Registrar General, Original Grants, ser. 5 p. 205.
12. Registrar General, Old Register Book 5 p. 231 entry 1000.
13. Marriage settlement by George Hall on Mary Hall, 1819, cited in Warner 1990:74.
14. Warner 1990:73-4; Arndell 1976:193-4, 206-8.
15. Maroota parish map.
16. Arndell 1976:194.
17. Maroota parish map.
18. Arndell 1976:207.
19. Interview with Gordon Johnston at the farm (then Pacific Park Caravan Park), 21 January 1983.
20. Barkley & Nichols 1994:70, 178.
21. Arndell 1976:188.
22. Personal communication, Rosemary Annable; Wood 1994:30-2.
23. Lazarus 1883.
24. Choi 1975.
25. Yong 1977.
26. Lee Lai To 1988.
27. Ma 1988: 159-85.
28. Lydon 1985.
29. Mueller jr 1986; Mueller jr 1987.
30. Ritchie 1986; Bell, Grimwade and Ritchie 1993; Macgregor forthcoming.
31. Ritchie 1993; Wegars 1993: 335-73.
32. Ritchie 1993:366. For Don see also Ng 1993.
33. Ritchie 1993:337-8.
34. Ritchie 1993:368, 369.

35. Piper 1988:34-42.
36. Ng forthcoming.
37. McCarthy 1986:18-19; McCarthy 1989:39-42.
38. May 1984.
39. May 1984: vii.
40. Vivian 1985; Jack, Holmes and Kerr 1984:51-8.
41. Jack forthcoming.
42. Jack and Casey 1991; Jack 1981; Jack 1983; Jack, Holmes and Kerr 1984
43. Bell, Grimwade and Ritchie 1993.
44. Bell forthcoming; Jack forthcoming; Jack 1986.

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