

Reviews

Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths (eds.), *Prehistory to Politics. John Mulvaney, the Humanities and the Public Intellectual*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996; pp xii, 271, 22 plates, ISBN 0 522 84748 X.

John Mulvaney's work, if not John Mulvaney in person, should be familiar to most readers of the *AHA Journal*. Mulvaney, who turned 70 in October 1995, is probably best known to Australian archaeologists as the 'founder' of Australian Prehistory. In the 1950s he was the first person to teach prehistory at an Australian University (Melbourne) and his pioneering excavations at Fromm's Landing and Kenniff Cave were instrumental in establishing the ice-age origins of human occupation of Australia. Since then he has had a long and distinguished career as a major player in Australian prehistory. However, as well-documented in this book, he has also been involved in many other things including the establishment, development and practice of Australian Historical Archaeology. For example, during the 1960s he encouraged Jim Allen to conduct research on the historical site of Port Essington in northern Australia. Jim Allen was the first wholly Australian-trained archaeologist to earn a doctorate (at the Australian National University in Canberra) and his Port Essington research helped pioneer historical archaeology in Australia. Since then, through his interest in archaeology, Australian history, anthropology, Aboriginal history and cultural heritage management, John Mulvaney has been actively involved in a number of key historical archaeology projects and places. Mulvaney's 1989 publication *Encounters in Place. Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1985* will be familiar to many Australian historical archaeologists and those interested in the archaeology of Aboriginal-settler contact.

This book is a collection of papers presented at the conference 'The Making of a Public Intellectual' held in honour of John Mulvaney at the Australian National University's Humanities Research Centre in November 1995. The editors aimed to use discussion of John Mulvaney's work to explore public issues associated with archaeology, anthropology and the environment. The papers are eclectic, reflecting John Mulvaney's own interests and his long and varied career. The main link between the papers is John Mulvaney himself. Several contributions have a strong biographical component. For example, in their introductory chapter Bonyhady and Griffiths present a sketch outline of major points in John Mulvaney's career to discuss the concept of the public intellectual in Australian society. Ken Inglis traces the history of Mulvaney's university career and offers the reader a taste of the changing flavour of university life in Australia from the 1940s to the 1990s. In the paper probably most directly relevant to Australian historical archaeology, Anne Bickford describes her 'Encounters in Places' with John Mulvaney over many years at Port Arthur, Hobart's Female Factory, Norfolk Island, Sydney's First Government House and elsewhere. Quoting extensively from her correspondence with him, Anne Bickford provides examples of John Mulvaney's very practical and pragmatic contribution to public archaeology in Australia. Marcia Langton uses an overview of John Mulvaney's involvement in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and her own interactions with him to

comment on the changing relationship between the academy and Aboriginal people from the 1960s to the present.

Most of the other papers use John Mulvaney's interests as a starting point to present their own research contributions in history, anthropology and cultural heritage studies. Mulvaney himself is almost entirely absent, except in spirit, from the main body of Greg Dening's cross-cultural history of the Marquesas, but the introduction to the paper recalls Dening's time at University with Mulvaney and his experiences at the Fromm's Landing excavations in the 1950s which convinced him to study history rather than archaeology. Tim Bonyhady takes John Mulvaney's interest and involvement in 'cultural heritage' and 'the national estate' as a starting point to explore the history and changing meaning of these concepts in an Australian context. Howard Morphy briefly acknowledges his intellectual debt to Mulvaney, but otherwise presents a further contribution to a debate currently topical in Australian anthropology and cultural studies about the notion of 'the Dreamtime' in studies of Aboriginal Australia. The paper is interesting and well-written but sits uneasily in the volume. Likewise, Deborah Bird Rose's beautifully crafted and thought-provoking paper on cultural geography in a colonial context pays only nominal homage to Mulvaney's interest in place and his role as a public intellectual, and, like Morphy's paper, seems somewhat out of place here.

Other contributors have more successfully incorporated more of John Mulvaney into their discussions. Tom Griffiths's elegant, informative and entertaining overview of the importance of John Mulvaney's 'Prehistory' to more recent Australian history and settler attitudes towards Aborigines and the Australian environment was a joy to read. Isabel McBryde compares John Mulvaney with other famous names in the history of archaeology who also became heavily involved in the public sphere (e.g. Jacob Worsaae, John Lubbock and Gertrude Bell) and paints an optimistic picture of the current state of Australian archaeology in a post(-)colonial Australia. Bain Attwood presents what he describes as a 'hermeneutic reading of Mulvaney's work' and argues, among other things, that John Mulvaney's seminal book 'The Prehistory of Australia' served to subvert the conventional relationship between Aborigines, Australia(ns) and history. The final contribution by Humphry McQueen is a broad historical overview of the meaning and role of the 'public intellectual'.

This is not a book about historical archaeology. However, it does demonstrate how historical archaeology, through the work of John Mulvaney and the people he has inspired and influenced, is part of a series of wider debates in Australian society — about Aborigines, history, anthropology, cultural studies, heritage management and cultural policy. For this reason alone I would recommend it to anyone interested in Australian historical archaeology. It also provides an accessible and interesting overview of a whole range of topics of contemporary relevance to Australian society which are rarely available in a single volume. Most of the papers are also extremely well-written. In short, this book is a good read and highly recommended.

Sarah Colley
School of Archaeology
University of Sydney

Stephen A. Mrozowski, Grace H. Ziesing, and Mary C. Beaudry, *Living on the Boott: Historical Archaeology at the Boott Mills Boardinghouses, Lowell, Massachusetts.* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1996; pp. 93, 34 illustrations, cloth US\$40, paperback US\$12.95. ISBN 1-55849-035-3.

This short book is written to inform the general public about the excavation at Boott Mills during the 1980s. A three-volume excavation report, *Interdisciplinary Investigations of the Boott Mills*, was published in 1987 and 1989.

In the preface the authors declare this book is a 'case study that illustrates some of the contributions historical archaeology is making to the broader study of the city's past'. Their case study is a large industrial complex of woollen mills and employees' accommodation. The focus of the archaeology is not the industrial process but the residential accommodation provided for a hierarchy of mill employees.

The authors discuss the role of historical archaeology in the interpretation of the Boott Mills, especially for discovering working-class lives that often are not included or identifiable when we rely solely on documentary sources. Further, they stress the importance of the historical archaeologist working within an interdisciplinary team. The historical record for Boott Mills covers all of the nineteenth century while the artefactual record spans 30 years from 1870 to 1900.

The text is structured into eight sections. The Introduction presents a brief overview of the historical development of the Boott Mills as an industrial complex from the late 1830s. The background to the development of the archaeological project stresses a research focus on the 'everyday lives' of the workers at the 'Boott', living in their corporation-supplied boarding houses and tenements. The initial occupants of the boarding houses were unskilled, unmarried female farm workers, 'mill girls'. Unskilled Irish, French-Canadian and, later, Eastern European immigrants succeeded them as employees and occupants of the boarding houses. The skilled workers and their families lived in the tenements, in self-contained apartments.

Archaeological excavation was undertaken in three areas. Two of these areas were the yard associated with boarding house #45 occupied by the 'mill girls' between 1850 and 1900; and the yard of tenement #48 whose occupants were married families with small children where the wife did not work in the mill. For a contrast of context the archaeologists included the excavation of the yard behind the house of an agent for the Boott Mills, a senior supervisory position. The boarding house and tenement were sold to private owners in 1907 and demolished in 1934.

The second section, 'Historical Archaeology in Context', emphasises the role of context within archaeological analysis and interpretation. Here context incorporates archaeological, social, cultural, class and historical perspectives to give meaning to peoples' lives. This section provides a simple, not simplistic, overview of the historical archaeologist's 'tools of trade', the sets of data used to acquire information about the past. First there is fieldwork which discusses the role of excavation, both documentary and oral history, archaeological features, artefacts, dating of artefacts, stratigraphy, plant and faunal remains and parasites. After fieldwork comes analysis of the collected information by a team of specialists. The collaborative nature of archaeological analysis is stressed and warnings are made about interpretation based on a single artefact type.

Section three examines 'Lowell's Urban Landscape' and the transformation of East Chelmsford from a soggy flood plain, through major engineering works and town planning, to a large-scale textile manufacturing and accommodation complex. The reasons behind the construction of this complex

of dwellings are discussed with emphasis placed on the need to create an attractive environment to attract workers for the mills. This section focuses on the social interpretation of the hierarchy of dwellings constructed for the employees of Boott Mills and the use of yards as working or recreation spaces.

The archaeological evidence collected from the yards of the boarding house and the agent's house illustrated opposite processes at work. Through time the agent's yard moved from a work area used for rubbish disposal and animal butchering to a grassed ornamental garden used only for recreation. At the boarding house the yard began as a well-tended space and ended as a messy area where food debris was thrown around. This interpretation links into the less than successful role of the Boott Mills' corporate power who tried to constrain the activities of their workers, both at work and at home.

Section four turns to an interpretation of the evidence of the physical remains to gain an understanding of the living conditions of the Boott Mill workers. Four issues are discussed. Firstly sanitation standards were determined by the location, condition and nature of privies and evidence for vermin activity. Hygiene conditions were reviewed in the context of working in the mills, a dirty, dusty environment, and the paucity of facilities for keeping residents clean. A survey of the evidence provides insight into the health of residents and their awareness of health issues. The facilities found at the boarding house were contrasted with those found at the agent's house which had indoor plumbing, running water in the kitchen and internal water closets.

Section five further examines living standards by looking at the evidence for meals. This includes the type of meat cuts, the plates used for serving and eating food, and the drinking vessels. Patterns of consumption generally conformed to what was anticipated but there were some inconsistencies. The ceramics generally corresponded with expectations. Cheaper ceramic were found at the boarding house with minimal differences observed at the tenement and more expensive transfer printed ceramics discovered at the agent's house. The least difference between the groups was found with the animal bone: there was no real divergence between the meat cuts eaten at the boarding house and the agent's house.

The next two sections review the evidence for leisure and how people adorned themselves. It ends with a general overview of the lives of the mill workers. Leisure mainly includes smoking and drinking of alcohol. The authors suggest they found evidence for deteriorating living standards for the workers that paralleled unrest over working conditions.

This book is well written, in a direct manner, with no jargon to confuse the general reader. The authors fulfil their intention admirably even though they may leave the professional wanting more. It is a pleasant change to see illustrations of ordinary fragmentary artefacts, like the ones I find, rather than beautifully photographed whole objects. In general the photographs are designed not to be artistic but to be informative. As is becoming more common in books published for the general public all references and citations are included at the end of the book under chapter heading. When writing for the public, or the foreign reader, it would be useful to include location maps of the site.

This book could easily be given to an interested friend or a student studying archaeology or to a historian who wonders why we need to study archaeology when we have history or to developers who wonder what becomes of their time and money. All would have an informative read. More excavation directors should aim to write a similar inexpensive and informative book for the public.

Mary Casey
Casey & Lowe Associates
Sydney