

## Reviews

**Buchli, V. and G. Lewis (eds), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*. Routledge, London, 2001; 194 pages; ISBN 0415232791 (paperback). US\$20.85**

This volume is an important landmark for archaeologists interested in the archaeology of more 'recent' time periods, the study of contemporary material culture and spaces, and archaeological theory. Despite being initially published in 2001 there is some relevant material in this collection for Australasian historical archaeologists, despite an increase in literature about the archaeology of the recent past in recent years.

There are two ways to approach this book: firstly, with an interest in the study of contemporary material culture and, secondly, with an interest in archaeological studies of recent periods and, perhaps, historical archaeology more broadly. This book will not engage all historical archaeologists: there is much here that tries to relate to broader disciplinary and social concerns and, unlike most archaeology, the studies in this volume are of the last century, such as studies of national monuments in South Africa, twentieth-century coal mining strike camps in Colorado, and council flats in Britain. This should be less shocking to AHA readers than northern hemisphere readers raised on a diet of Timeteam.

The study of the twentieth century is the rationale and strength of the volume, as the editors set out to revisit decade-old propositions and issues that arise when you argue that 'archaeology no longer is a discipline defined by a particular time period' (p. 3). The introduction reveals that the editors wanted to revisit the work of earlier archaeologists, particularly Schiffer, Gould and Rathje. It has been more than a quarter of a century since Rathje's Garbage Project and the 1978 meeting of the American Anthropological Association that led to the publication of the *Modern Material Culture: The Archaeology of Us* (edited by Richard Gould and Michael Schiffer, 1981, New York, Academic Press). Now these largely North American concerns have been joined by European (mainly British) archaeologists with interests in archaeological theory, design, power, disempowerment and material culture studies. In *Modern Material Culture* there was a strong interest in the (then) recent past as a testing ground for the development of archaeological theory and in understanding the relationship between human behavior and the archaeological record. The foci on ethno-archaeological approaches and middle range research that characterised Gould's and Schiffer's volume has shifted decades later to a focus on the 'archaeology of us' (p. 5).

What happens when archaeological methods are applied to recent material culture? The chapters vary in success in this volume, and one feels that the editorial hands lay heavy with 6 chapters of 17 being authored by Buchli and Lucas. That said, their contributions do provide some valid and interesting discussion to contextualise the individual contributions. Reflecting a thematic focus on the archaeology of 'us' the volume is divided into four sections: (1) production and consumption, (2) remembering and forgetting, (3) disappearance and disclosure, and (4) conclusions. In Part 1, Majewski and Schiffer usefully revisit the archaeological study of the development of modern consumerism with a focus on manufactured ceramics. Stevenson considers the relationships between design movements and the everyday material culture available to archaeologists. Rathje revisits the Garbage Project, its history and progress—it is a useful review of this research. In Part 2, Hart and Winter consider monuments in recent South Africa, while the Ludlow Collective report on

work at Ludlow, the best-known site of 1913–1914 Colorado Coal Field War. Wilkie reports on research into two twentieth-century sites, one associated with wealthy 'frat boys' in California, the other in Louisiana with an African-American sharecropping community. In Part 3, Legendre reports on a Lancaster WWII wreck site in Fléville-devant-Nancy (France); Doretti and Fondebrider briefly consider the role of forensic archaeology to the measurement of human rights violations; and Cox considers forensic archaeology in the UK. Buchli and Lucas' description of their two-day excavation of a council flat abandoned in 1997 applies archaeological methods to a (very) recent site. In the conclusion, Olivier and Hodder provide thoughtful essays about the archaeology of the contemporary past. These two chapters remind us of the very immediate access to remembered and experienced events, including death and tragedy, experienced in studies of the recent past. The authors in this volume perhaps seek to change the definition of archaeology, much like the work of processualists in the 1970s. While there is not enough depth here to accomplish that aim, the authors do 'push beyond the edges of the discipline', as stated by Hodder (p. 191).

I recommend this slim volume to Australasian historical archaeologists who do not have it on their shelf, especially those challenged by the archaeology of twentieth (and perhaps twenty-first) century sites. These are issues that are being faced by some antipodean archaeologists. Many stakeholder groups have very strong interests in the remains of the recent and personally experienced past, and in Australia there has been a swathe of studies of such contexts in the last decade. The absence of studies from Australia and like places is a weakness of the volume; there is a strong focus on the UK and USA (16 contributions), with one paper from South Africa. In Australia, ahead lies a strong and sustained public interest in twentieth-century sites related to war and conflict: archaeologists are already involved in the interpretation of battlegrounds, illicit burials, maritime sites, and that work will continue to demand knowledge of the archaeology of the recent past. Australasia will continue to be a testing ground for work into the archeology of more recent periods: if so, this book may be for you.

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**Pfeiffer, Michael A., *Clay Tobacco Pipes and the Fur Trade of the Pacific Northwest and Northern Plains*. J. Byron Sudbury (ed.), *Historic Clay Tobacco Pipe Studies, Research Monograph 1*. Phytolith Press, Ponca City, 2006; ISBN 978-0-978083-1-7. \$US25.**

Available from Byron Sudbury  
<http://www.claypipes.com> or [jschemistry@hotmail.com](mailto:jschemistry@hotmail.com)

Michael Smoke Pfeiffer is well known in historical archaeological circles for his interest in clay tobacco pipes (as well as black powder firearms and fire lookout towers). Back in 1982 he completed a Masters thesis at the University of Idaho on clay tobacco pipes from the fur trade era (1800 to the 1890s) on the Northern Plains and Pacific Northwest of the USA. This book is a reproduction of Pfeiffer's thesis as it was in 1982.

At the time of Pfeiffer's research, studies of clay tobacco pipes were fairly fragmentary and there was little published reference material except for the larger studies of Oswald and Walker (which had really focused on the British producers of

clay pipes). Pfeiffer's thesis was written to address the need to adequately record clay pipes from archaeological contexts so that their potential in answering questions about social status and economic networks could be realised. He selected two contiguous geographic areas the Pacific Northwest and Northern Plains in order to examine clay pipe collections and see how they reflect marketing and trade histories of these areas.

In the thesis the analysis is undertaken at the level of pipe type with various pipe types being described from each site and illustrated by photographs and line drawings. The actual methodology for deriving clay pipe types and the rationale for measurements taken are not explicitly discussed and for this reviewer this is the least satisfactory part of the study.

Assemblages from some 19 sites are discussed. The conclusions drawn at the end of the study summarise results for each region and then make a brief comparison between the two regions. There is an addition to the thesis with an image of the author and list of other clay pipe publications.

In reviewing a study from the early 1980s published some 25 years later it is difficult to make critical comment. It is to be hoped that clay tobacco pipe studies have moved on since then. Pfeiffer's work was essential in creating a basic documentation of collections and as a preliminary exploration of how to use clay pipes to draw meaningful conclusions about the past.

By publishing Pfeiffer's thesis Sudbury has also made this documentation available for other clay pipe researchers not only in the USA but globally, as is appropriate for an artefact that was exported across the world. Thus the book forms a useful reference to the Australasian researcher even if the precise conclusions regarding the Northern Plains and Pacific Northwest are only of passing interest. The book will be a useful part of a reference collection of clay pipe studies.

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**Little, Barbara J. Historical Archaeology: Why the Past Matters. Left Coast Press Inc., California, 2006; 216 pages; hardback ISBN 978-1-59874-022-6; paperback ISBN 978-1-59874-023-3. US\$22.95.**

I recently rediscovered a letter of reference written in the 1970s for my grandfather when he finished work as a transport supervisor at a big laundry business in Cape Town. In part, it stated that he worked well, and got on well, with coloured and black employees. This character reference, which my partner was quite shocked by, raises questions about historical context, colonialism, capitalism, identity, power, control and change. It is many of these concepts that Barbara J. Little explores in her book on the relevance of the past.

Little provides a number of reasons for why she has written this book. Foremost, is her concern about the disjuncture between saying we value history because we learn from the past and, our practice, which suggests that we actually learn very little. She is also motivated by the ways that we selectively remember parts of the past to support the status quo—with all its injustices and inequalities.

'Historical archaeologists combine the methods of both history and archaeology' (p. 14) according to Little's view of the discipline. So why do history and historical archaeology matter? Without wanting to give away the ending to the book ... I will. Essentially, she argues that archaeology needs to re-position itself as a discipline away from the 'heritage movement' by making stronger connections with social and

political empowerment through concepts of civic renewal, restorative justice and transformative learning.

On a more personal level, Little emphasises throughout the book 'questions and questioning as a path of discovery' (p. 171). She links this emphasis to an Akan (Ghana) word, *sankofa*, 'that refers to the concept of reclaiming the past and understanding how the present came to be so that we can move forward' (p. 15).

The journey between aims and conclusions travels over four sections comprising a series of short chapters. The first introduces the goals of archaeology (six chapters); the second describes what archaeologists care about, including topics, evidence and ethics (six chapters); the third section is a tour of excavations around the world (10 chapters); and finally a focus on public scholarship (seven chapters).

Australian historical archaeological work appears in a number of contexts. There is a very brief reference to archaeological sites to visit in Sydney and Tasmania (p. 28); mention of the concept of shared history (p. 48); a chapter on the Irish diaspora and convicts in Australia with reference to particular archaeologists' work—Eleanor Casella's at the Ross Female Factory and Graham Connah's at Lake Innes Estate (p. 102–106); mention of urban investigations at 'little Lon' in Melbourne and The Rocks in Sydney (p. 123); and a reference to Van Dieman's land in lyrics from a U2 song (p. 102).

The 172 pages of text are illustrated with eleven black and white photographs and there is a section on 'Further Readings'. The book is clearly aimed at 'introductory students' and 'professionals unfamiliar with archaeology'. However, it also has relevance to those with an interest in Public Archaeology, particularly because it focuses on interpretation and what historical archaeological data has to say about human behaviours, rather than the intricacies and complexities of the archaeological (and historical) record itself.

The book seeks to make historical archaeology accessible and articulate complex ideas that the discipline addresses. On one level it is quite simplistic and perhaps an unsatisfying read. In part this is because the case studies are only briefly touched on, and also because generalising runs the risk of trivialising, for example: 'Historical archaeologists continue to excavate sites for the purposes of accurate visitor information' (p. 28); and (of Five Points neighbourhood in Manhattan) 'The archaeology suggests that a mix of households occupied the neighbourhood, displaying disparate lifestyles' (p. 123). In addition, I found the use of the *sankofa* notion throughout the book forced and at times jarring.

On another level Little's book contains a wealth of ideas and thoughtful exploration, relevant well beyond its United States focus. As an archaeologist working within a government context, the book was useful to me in considering how archaeology and heritage management fit with the idea that social change is a desired objective of government action. What are the public benefits of historical archaeology that is either funded by government or mandated by legal requirements? Sadly, I am not entirely clear in my own mind on this question, though Little's book does support, and give more coherent argument for, some of my thoughts in this regard.

Finally, this review was somehow supposed to tie back to my grandfather's character reference. However, I will take the lead here from Little: 'I want to leave this book somewhat open-ended and resist the urge to wrap up its threads too neatly' (p. 171). If you did not get a copy of the book at the New Ground conference, then it is available in Australia from Footprint Books or any good bookseller.

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**Burke, Heather and Smith, Claire (eds), *Archaeology to Delight and Instruct: Active Learning in the University Classroom*. One World Archaeology. Left Coast Press, California, 2007; 288 pages; hardback ISBN 978-1-59874-256-5; paperback ISBN 978-1-59874-257-2. US\$29.95.**

I am sure you all know the aphorism 'don't judge a book by its cover', but how many of us actually heed this advice? I probably would not have been attracted to read this book if curiosity had not made me put my hand up to review it. Do not be put off by the rather twee cover illustration and title, this is by far the best collection of texts I have found on teaching archaeology theory and critical thinking.

In fact I wish the book had been available years ago, not just for myself but for those who lectured me! Having taught in museum and university settings for 30 years I feel in a position to recommend it to all lecturers, teachers and museum educators. In fact if you are just starting out this is a must for your bookshelf.

The book is one of the latest in the well known One World Archaeology Series of over 50 titles. I have read a number, but found this the most vocationally rewarding yet. It was divided into six parts each comprising a number of chapters contributed by a total of 17 different authors and co-authors, from the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia. Most make a single contribution, apart from the editors (Burke and Smith) who contribute three and one author (Gail Higginbottom) who contributes two.

While this large number of authors might have undermined the book's cohesion and impact the end result is quite the opposite. The structure is well thought out and planned. It proceeds in a sequence of well edited, very readable, 'bite-sized' and thought provoking chapters, ordered into the following six themed parts: Part I 'Role Play' (3 chapters), Part II 'Games' (3 chapters), Part III 'Simulations' (3 chapters), Part IV 'Hands-on Activities' (5 chapters), Part V

'Creative Construction and Performance' (4 chapters) and Part VI 'Critical Reflection' (2 chapters).

It is simply not possible in a review to do justice to each of the contributors, while concentrating on just a few would not be fair to the many. There really is not a 'weak link' in the book. All the chapters are both creative and practical. Each describes a specific 'applied class situation'; tried, tested and evaluated by the authors. Strengths, weaknesses, and alternatives are also discussed. In all there are 19 exciting step-by-step ready to use teaching templates.

As a university and museum based anthropologist I found the final four parts (chapters 7–20) the most directly useful and applicable to my own teaching repertoire, both in technique and content (e.g. simulated excavation, analysis of Indigenous rock markings, modern litter as material culture, scrapbook exercises). Chapter by chapter, part by part, the book successfully demonstrates ways to make teaching archaeological theory far more inclusive and enjoyable for both the students and lecturers. A version of 'Draw an Archaeologist Test' (chapter 15, Susan D. Renoe) will definitely be given to the 'first years' next semester, but 'Toilets as Tools of Teaching' (chapter 13, Martin Wobst) may have to be tried on the Ethics Committee first!

This book is a really useful resource for new exciting ideas on how to approach teaching theoretical concepts in archaeology courses and in the words of one contributor, 'why not let students enjoy it if they learn just as much?' (chapter 20, Brian Candy, K. Anne Pyburn p. 266). Make sure you get this for your bookshelf: it will improve both your teaching technique and your student evaluations.

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