



# ASHA

AUSTRALASIAN SOCIETY FOR  
HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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## ASHA 2023 Conference – Session Proposals

### New Materialist approaches to archaeologies of capital

#### Title

*New Materialist approaches to archaeologies of capital*

#### Session Convenor

Nicholas Pitt (Nick)

#### Proposal

There's nothing new about archaeologies of capital. For decades, many have placed capitalism at the centre of historical archaeology. Yet, it currently occupies the fringes of the analytical frameworks of most historical archaeologists working in our region. Anecdotally, this reticence lies in part with the difficult process of relating theory, ideology and global systems to the actual sites and objects studied by archaeologists – a process that Gavin Lucas mischievously has called 'archaeological alchemy' (2012: 15).

Two interrelated developments within archaeology and history over the past decade or so possibly offer ways new ways to think through archaeologies of capital and address this reticence.

Firstly, many archaeologists have contributed to a broad range of approaches coming out of the humanities and social sciences known under the umbrella of 'more-than-human' histories and 'new materialism'. These focus on the relationships between humans and physical ('more-than-human') things rather seeing material culture as merely a reflection of human thoughts – thereby offering new ways through the alchemical process of linking things to larger human stories.

Secondly, many historians have begun to use new materialist approaches to weave together cultural, economic, and environmental histories. A conscious focus on things and more-than-human actors is bringing gender, race, and ecology to histories of capital. Historians working in Australasia have particularly recognised the potential of new materialist approaches to link together three key themes in Australasian historiography – land, labour and capital.

This session seeks papers that think through the archaeologies of capital in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific in new ways, sensitive to the past and present relationships between people and things. Case studies may range in scale from a shopkeeper and her wares, to a publicly-listed company and its ports. Together, this session hopes to highlight the contribution that historical archaeology can make to understanding the development of capitalism in the region.

#### References:

Lucas, Gavin. 2012. *Understanding the Archaeological Record*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845772>.

## Using technology and science of the present to investigate the past

### **Title**

*Using technology and science of the present to investigate the past*

### **Session Convenors**

Greg Hill, Tracy Martens, Dr Rebekah (Bek) Kurpiel and Susan Lawrence

### **Proposal**

Historical archaeology is an investigative process that draws upon an eclectic range of sources and methods. New scientific techniques and applications of established techniques in novel contexts continue to enhance and expand on information gleaned from traditional survey and excavation. This developing area of inquiry continues to enhance both macro approaches that connect sites to their landscape context, and micro approaches that retrieve information from features often invisible to the naked eye.

State-of-the-art 3D modelling and remote sensing approaches, such as LiDAR, photogrammetry, and Ground Penetrating Radar can improve how sites are analysed, interpreted, documented, compared and managed, while also facilitating community understanding and connections to the past. In addition to new methods, established analytical methods applied to previously understudied materials, like archaeobotanical remains and archaeological textiles and fibres, are offering new data sources and perspectives on the past that can expand and improve archaeological investigations.

### **Proposed format:**

This session invites 15-minute presentations that are focused on the development and/or application of scientific and specialist technical methods to historical archaeology projects.

## Melbourne Archaeology: Future Directions

### **Title**

*Melbourne Archaeology: Future Directions*

### **Session Convenor**

Megan Goulding

### **Proposal**

2023 marks 30 years since the ground-breaking Melbourne Central Activities District Archaeological Management Plan was completed by Marie Fels, Siobhan Lavelle and Dana Mider (1993) for the then Victoria Archaeological Survey. This important piece of work led to over 800 historical archaeological sites being listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory within Melbourne's CBD creating the statutory context within which over 200 archaeological investigations have since been undertaken.

Over the past three decades of archaeological investigation a significant body of knowledge has emerged around the post settlement occupation of Melbourne and its rapid development as a modern city. Archaeology has shone a light on the fabric of Melbourne's history and in so doing has contributed to a deeper appreciation of the history of Melbourne and its people.

In reflecting on what has been – the development of Melbourne and the remarkable insights into its history that has come from investigations into its archaeological traces – there is now an opportunity to look forward in order to contemplate what might be; where is archaeology heading in Melbourne? What opportunities and pitfalls lie ahead? What will the next 30 years of archaeological investigation look like and what might be achieved?

In this session we are seeking papers that look forward into a future archaeology of Melbourne by drawing upon what we have learned and imagining what we can achieve in terms of improved methodologies and techniques for site recording, synthesis of data, and interpretation.

## Humanising artefacts in the present: artefact studies in Australasian historical archaeology

### **Title**

*Humanising artefacts in the present: artefact studies in Australasian historical archaeology*

### **Session Convenors**

Denis Gojak and Bronwyn Woff

### **Proposal**

Artefacts are at the core of archaeological practice and interpretation. As objects they capture cultural behaviour in intent, use and change through time. As finds we invest in their discovery, analysis and curation. They provide a tangible two-way link between past and present, but how do we ensure that we don't lose sight of the intangible human connection that these objects can contain and inspire? We encourage topics addressing the session theme of connection between people, both past and present.

These may draw out stories of real historical individuals and how object(s) factored into their lives, show connections between contemporary people and the past through interpretation and interaction with archaeology and artefacts, or discuss more theoretical issues such as analysis, bias and how our own preconceived ideas colour our interpretation of artefacts and the past. You may be inspired to tell a personal story of your own connection to an object through the archaeological process - how 'doing archaeology' connects you to the past.

We also welcome papers addressing artefacts and their study as objects themselves or within their archaeological context. These could include detailed understandings of a particular artefact category, assemblages, specific objects or the background to archaeological artefact behaviour.

### **Proposed format:**

Mix of full-length papers (20 mins) and short presentations (10 mins & max 5 slides max)

## Community Archaeology Reflections on a Variety of Projects

### **Title**

*Community Archaeology Reflections on a Variety of Projects*

### **Session Convenors**

Helen Nicholson and Matthew Kelly

### **Proposal**

Archaeologists now recognise the important role that community involvement and collaboration can have in their research and site work. From gathering oral history, genealogical research, deploying volunteers, and public interpretation through to ongoing stewardship of heritage sites there are multifarious ways in which archaeologists now engage with the wider community around them. Just as varied are the rationales, motives and results associated with this engagement.

This session will endeavour to showcase a variety of archaeological and heritage projects which demonstrate the importance and efficacy of this engagement.

### **Proposed Format**

The session organisers would welcome papers addressing, public participation in excavations or artefact identification/analysis, public outreach programs, oral history and its application in archaeological contexts, interpreting archaeology for local communities, community stewardship of sites, collaboration with local communities in archaeological projects.

## Archaeology, collections, and Australian South Sea Islander Lived Identities: Synthesising a five-year project

### **Title**

*Archaeology, collections, and Australian South Sea Islander Lived Identities: Synthesising a five-year project*

### **Session Convenors**

Adele Zubrzycka and James L. Flexner

### **Proposal**

The Australian South Sea Islander Lives Identities project began in 2018. It was designed to bring together research into museum collections, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes and intangible heritage in partnership with Australian South Sea Islander communities in tropical Queensland. Australian South Sea Islanders are the descendants of Pacific labourers, primarily from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands but also other places, who were imported to Queensland and northern New South Wales to establish the Australian sugarcane industry between 1863-1900.

The project used a community oriented approach to help facilitate Australian South Sea Islanders from Ayr, Mackay, Rockhampton, and Joskeleigh to record, develop and re-evaluate their multifaceted heritage. This session will bring together perspectives from members of the Australian South Sea Islander community, academics and professionals involved in the project, and external researchers, to share their experiences working in Australian South Sea Islander research.

Papers will discuss advantages, complexities and limitations of different approaches to the Australian South Sea Islander past, including findings from field archaeology, material culture, landscapes and memories, and insights into the development of the community-oriented approach within the project.

### **Proposed Format**

We are proposing a mixed format of short (10 minute) or long (20 minute) papers with 10 minutes allocated for questions and discussion at the end of each session.

## Fast presentations for the past and the present

### **Title**

*Fast presentations for the past and the present*

### **Session Convenor:**

Geraldine Mate

### **Proposal**

This high-energy lightning round will provide stimulating and fast-paced updates on research, commercial and community-based projects. This informal session gives participants an opportunity to deliver a succinct 3-minute talk on forthcoming, current and recently completed projects connecting historical archaeology with communities. Presentations are invited that focus on projects that address community engagement, changing and varied understandings of cultural heritage, and approaches to interpretations of archaeological heritage for the public. More general topics addressing the conference themes will also be welcomed

### **Proposed Format**

Questions for presenters will be scheduled at the end of the session. A maximum of 3 slides is recommended.

## Workshop

### Why does archaeology matter?

#### Title

*Why does archaeology matter?*

#### **Session Convenor:**

Kate Clark

#### Proposal

There is a growing body of international evidence for the benefits of archaeology to wellbeing – from the mental health benefits for veterans of taking part in fieldwork or for older people of engaging with objects in care settings. And there is now evidence for the economic benefits of the archaeology sector as a whole.

But what do we know for Australia? This workshop is an open invitation to ASHA members to share their knowledge and experience of the wider benefits that archaeology can bring to communities, to places, to the environment and to the economy.

It will go beyond significance to ask questions about the wider social, economic, environmental and creative values of storytelling through places and objects (aka archaeology). We will also explore some of the barriers to realising those wider values. The findings will contribute to a wider AICOMOS/University of Canberra study that is looking at ways to embed cultural heritage into wider public policy in Australia

#### Proposed Format

Ideally a 1.5-hour workshop in round table layout where people can see each other rather than in a lecture theatre.

## Posters

A poster session will also be available. We invite submissions for posters addressing the theme of the conference, conference session themes or that present on current activities related historical archaeology.

Those wishing to do poster presentations should submit a poster title and short abstract to [conference@asha.org.au](mailto:conference@asha.org.au) by **14 August 2023**.

Submissions should include the full names of all authors, along with institutional affiliations and contact details for at least one of the authors.