



## 2006 Public Lecture Series Manning Clarke Centre Theatre 6 7:30pm Wednesday May 17

# Entangled Places

INTERACTIONAL HISTORIES IN THE WESTERN SIMPSON DESERT AREA, NORTHERN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**A place in the western Simpson Desert area is simultaneously a place in the pre-colonial landscape, in the 'contact zone' that was the Overland Telegraph Line from the 1870s to the early 20th century, in the pastoral industry which followed it and in the Witjera National Park established in 1986. We need a historical approach that can take in these long term changes, yet retain the local detail of how people have lived through them, and the continuities that underly that. By juxtaposing the diverse historical and archaeological sources that relate to the places — extant structures and the spatial patterning of artefacts, published and archival texts, maps, images and oral histories — we can begin to understand the complex interactions that have made the people and places of the western Simpson Desert.**

*Ingereth Macfarlane is the Managing Editor of the Aboriginal History journal, published out of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. She has an MA from the University of Southampton, UK, and is currently completing a PhD on the 'long term history' of the interactions of people and places in the western Simpson Desert, working with members of the Irrwanyere Aboriginal Corporation who speak for that country. She has worked as a project archaeologist with National Parks and Wildlife in Tasmania, as a tutor in archaeology, as a consultant editor and as a consultant archaeologist.*

[www.aboriginalhistory.org](http://www.aboriginalhistory.org)

*All welcome. Entry is by gold coin donation at the door.*

*Please join us afterwards for light supper and a chat - find out how 'down to earth' archaeologists really are.*

# WHO OWNS THE PAST?

News from the UK: In November last year an archaeology team from the University of Manchester uncovered a unique Roman period tombstone during a rescue excavation on the site of a new apartment complex in Lancaster.

The tombstone originally stood around 2.5m high, and is broken into three large pieces and a number of smaller fragments. It is unusual in both the quality and the design of the carving. The tombstone depicts a mounted soldier holding his sword and the head of a vanquished enemy, while the body of his headless enemy kneels beneath the horse, still holding his sword. It is thought that this is the first depiction found of a mounted soldier beheading an enemy. The inscription, still containing traces of red paint, names the stone as being that of a member of the Treveri tribe, a group which occupied a region around where Belgium, France and Germany meet in the present day. The man was probably named Lucius Nisus Vodvilleius or Vodvilltius, although his exact name is not clear as the inscription is abbreviated. He served in the Ala Augusta, and a woman named Domitia, possibly the man's wife or daughter, commissioned the stone.



The excitement of the find was somewhat spoiled, however, with Lancaster locals now worried that the tombstone may not remain in the area, or even in the country. Developer Christopher Tudor-Whelan has contacted Sotheby's to determine a possible price for the artifact if it was sold in New York. Tudor-Whelan said that he hoped that the value of the artifact might help to cover the costs of the excavation that produced it. The piece has been valued at a potential price of \$US100,000. When asked how he felt about the artifact's discovery, Tudor-Whelan said "The archaeological guys were more excited than me. I thought, 'Oh my God, this will hold up the development'. At the end, the proof of the pudding is how much it is worth."

In February, the leader of the Lancaster City Council, Ian Barker, wrote to the Secretary responsible for granting the export licence required for the export of cultural objects, asking that she refuse one for the tombstone should there be any suggestion of it being sold out of the UK. According to Mr Barker, planning permission was granted by the city council with the understanding that there was an obligation not to dispose of important archaeological finds.

Mr Barker said: "No one could have anticipated finding a stone of such significance, but it was known that this could be an important archaeological site.

Planning permission was only granted on condition that a proper archaeological investigation was carried out. The costs of this should have been built into the development, so it's more than a little opportunistic to seek to recover them just because something really important has been found.

This stone is an important relic of Lancaster's Roman past. In my view it should stay in Lancaster and the public should be able to see it. It shouldn't be sold into a private collection or sent abroad.

I will certainly be asking officers of the city and the county councils to do all they can to enforce the obliga-

tions attached to the planning consent.

I've asked Tessa Jowell to refuse an export licence if this is sold abroad, so that we have a chance to keep the gravestone in Lancaster."

Tudor-Whelan responded by telling The Visitor Newspaper:

"I have invested a lot in Lancaster and I'm not looking to sell off its heritage.

But I would like to cover my costs. I had to pay a total of about £39,000 to have the digs completed under the planning regulations and, with the delay to the building that resulted, I reckon it's cost me about £50,000, which is a lot to recoup.

Sotheby's told me of a ballpark figure in the region of \$100,000 and said this sort of thing was very popular through their New York office.

But I've already been contacted by someone who offered to buy it as long as it remained in Lancaster and that's what I'd like to happen – but we'll have to see what develops."

Thanks to Jack Golson for bringing this to CAS's attention.

**References:**

<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/BA/ba87/news.shtml>

<http://www.canadiancontent.net/forums/about11421.html>

<http://www.morecambetoday.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=34&ArticleID=1360589>

<http://www.morecambetoday.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=34&ArticleID=1351557>

## Call for contributions

We have had a few articles written by CAS members for Old News...have you got something archaeologically interesting to say? An anecdote? A joke!?...contact us at [contact@cas.asn.au](mailto:contact@cas.asn.au) and send in your contributions. This is your newsletter and it can only be as interesting as you make it!

### **C A S 2 0 0 6 C o m m i t t e e C o n t a c t D e t a i l s**

President	Helen Cooke	0408 443 243 or 6121 4606 (wk)	<a href="mailto:helen.cooke@oipc.gov.au">helen.cooke@oipc.gov.au</a>
Vice President	Emma Bonthorne	0402 649 123	<a href="mailto:cleoemma@hotmail.com">cleoemma@hotmail.com</a>
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Secretary	Adrian Henham	0413 193 493	<a href="mailto:ado1000@hotmail.com">ado1000@hotmail.com</a>
Committee Member	Cameron Atkinson	0439 760 566	<a href="mailto:CameronAtkinson@gmail.com">CameronAtkinson@gmail.com</a>
Committee Member/ Publicity	Kristie Martin	6236 9343 0403 632 443	<a href="mailto:kristie_martin@ekit.com">kristie_martin@ekit.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	Richard Hekimian	0417 417 139	<a href="mailto:paservank@hotmail.com">paservank@hotmail.com</a>
Enquiries	<a href="mailto:contact@cas.asn.au">contact@cas.asn.au</a>		
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Date	Speaker	Title
February 15	Matthew Spriggs	Teouma (Vanuatu)
15 March	Ann Jackson-Nakano	D i g g i n g D e e p Unearthing the Ngambri
19 April	Mike Smith	'Peopling' the Cleland Hills: Writing an Aboriginal history of western Central Australia 1850-1980.
17 May	Ingereth Macfarlane	Entangled Places
21 June	Lori Richardson	Repatriation in northern America and Australia
19 July	Colin Pardoe	TBA
16 August	TBA	
20 September	TBA	
18 October	Peter Bellwood	TBA
15 November	Dr Geoffrey R. Clark	TBA

## Joke O' the Week

**Q. How many archaeologists does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A. Well, actually, it only takes a couple to remove the old bulb, but then they get so involved in studying the old bulb (especially in trying to correlate its appearance with all other burned-out bulbs within a 1000 km radius), that they never get around to putting the new bulb in...**

### Ad Space

Do you have anything archaeological to advertise? If you know of, or are running field-work this year and you need volunteers, or you want to volunteer yourself, then contact us at [contact@cas.asn.au](mailto:contact@cas.asn.au) and we can advertise it for you in Old News or on the mailing list. Websites and archaeology-related events are also welcome!

# IPPA CONGRESS REPORT

Sue O'Connor

The Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Congress was held in Manila between March 20th and 26th. Papers were presented by 5 members Archaeology and Natural History, RSPAS, ANU including Dr Sue O'Connor, Dr Sally Brockwell, Dr Stuart Bedford, Dr Judith Cameron and Dr Katherine Szabo. O'Connor, Cameron and Szabo also ran sessions. Of the hundreds of papers that were given during the 6 concurrent sessions run over 5 days at the IPPA Congress, only 3 were selected by Science for discussion in the latest issue (see Science 312 ) and 2 of these were by Archaeology and Natural History researchers. Stuart Bedford's research at Teouma on the Lapita burial site in Vanuatu which will provide the first firm physical anthropological and DNA evidence on the origin of the Polynesians, was the feature article, and Judith Cameron's and Peter Bellwood's remarkable find of the Vietnamese Dong Son boat built using Roman ship building techniques was also featured and a photograph of the boat was reproduced. Catch up with these exciting projects on [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org)



2 March 2006 to 28 May 2006, 9am to 5pm, First Australian's Focus Gallery

**People of the Cedar: First Nations Art from the Northwest Coast of Canada** is an exhibition of contemporary and historic native art which expresses the richness of artistic culture among the First Nation Peoples of Canada's Northwest Coast, both past and present. The exhibition includes carvings, masks, cedar bark weavings, ceremonial blankets, paintings and works on paper created by artists from British Columbia. Predominantly made from cedar wood and bark, shells, textiles and natural fibre, the works reflect the continuing traditions of the artists' direct and deeply spiritual connection with the land, especially the coast and forests.

**NATIONAL  
MUSEUM OF  
AUSTRALIA  
CANBERRA**

# The Dorothy Cameron Prize

A generous bequest was made to the Centre for Archaeological Research (CAR) from the Estate of the late Mrs Dorothy Cameron, a noted Australian artist who was involved in excavations at Çatalhöyük (Turkey) in the 1960s and who had maintained a strong interest in the interpretation of the archaeological remains found there. She had earlier donated her artefact collection to the School of Archaeology and Anthropology and had endowed a scholarship at the University of Sydney. In consultation with members of her family, the bequest will be used to fund the Dorothy Cameron Prize for the most-accomplished published paper by an ANU archaeology student each year. Nominations may be made either by the student in question or (with their permission) by their supervisor. Some eligible students will by now be graduates. Please would supervisors actively draw the attention of any likely nominees whom they are supervising or have supervised to the existence and impending closing date of the prize.

The closing date is Friday 2 June. Applications/nominations, marked 'Cameron Prize', should reach the office of Dr Sally Brockwell, CAR administrator, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Coombs Building, by close of business on this date. Please note the conditions attached, which include that 2 copies of the publication(s) entered should accompany the application/nomination. CAR hopes to present the prize at a special ceremony on Friday 30 June.

Brochures are available. Please see the administrator of your department or contact Sally Brockwell Administrator of the Centre for Archaeological Research, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies  
ANU Canberra ACT 0200 Ph: 61 2 6125 0470 Email: [car@anu.edu.au](mailto:car@anu.edu.au)

**If you enjoyed Mike Smith's talk on Peopling the Cleland Hills: Aboriginal history in western Central Australia 1850-1980, you can order the book from Aboriginal History Inc, Canberra, [www.aboriginalhistory.org](http://www.aboriginalhistory.org)**

**Tom Griffiths wrote about this book:**

**This is an unusual and compelling history of an Australian frontier. In it, the archaeologist turns historian. Mike Smith sifts documents and memories in order to describe the last century and a half of culture contact in the region where older sediments have previously been his study. He uses Puritjarra as a place from which to view the modern social exchange and disruption generated across Kukatja country by the European colonial invasion. This is not just a fine, original history, but also a challenging model of archaeological practice.**

**In The Australian's reviews of the best books of 2005 on the weekend, it was recommended by Nicolas Rothwell in the following terms:**

**Nicolas Rothwell:**

**In a year of disrupted reading, a handful of titles stood out as works full of insight and redemptive force. Perhaps the most original and certainly the most obscure of these was Mike Smith's Peopling the Cleland Hills (Aboriginal History Inc), the tale of a celebrated stretch of desert country west of Alice Springs. Meticulous in its reconstruction of lost time and near-vanished memories, restrained and sober in its tone and voice, this book sets a benchmark for writing that seeks to capture the clash of civilisations in central Australia.**

