

CAS President's report 2014

On behalf of CAS I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on today, the Ngunnawal, Ngunawal, Ngambri and Ngarigu people and to pay our respects to their elders, past and present.

Hello from afar – I will be thinking of all you members and friends as I enjoy my spa in Caloundra!

What an exciting year this has been. A wealth of amazing speakers, beginning with our traditional kick-off by Prof Spriggs and the latest discoveries in Vanuatu. The past few years have illustrated not only the remarkable excavation finds at Teouma but the on-going discoveries of anatomy, chronology, sourcing of materials (and humans), the effects of colonisation on island biota, and the peopling of the Pacific. This is testament to the continuing painstaking analyses that archaeologists, geoscientists and a range of other specialists can and should undertake on excavated materials. And the results will rewrite the history of the Pacific, as did the revelations of Star Carr in European history.

CAS is blessed by the willing speakers who share their research on topics which are stimulating and often at the cutting edge of research. Our program delivers nine lectures a year in conjunction with our colleagues in CAR. This year Dr Judith Cameron amazed us with the details of her research on textiles in the Yangzi Valley; Prof Patrick De Dekker AM lured us with tales of French cuisine on the high seas and the evidence for burning in Australia after the extinction of megafauna. Ben Shaw enlightened us on the archaeology of Rossel Island and Kris Bonnici presented a novel view of Ramses the Great as the Father of Public Relations.

I have to digress here to say that the ANU and even the Canberra Times sought us out to publicise Kris's talk, testament to the lure of classical archaeology over the scintillating research into stone artefacts and sea level changes in Australasia. I have bent myself backward and sweated blood for over 20 years to promote the archaeological research of this Society and the wonders of research presented by our colleagues in Australia and the Pacific, but we've never achieved the media interest that one dead old Pharaoh can summon. Alison and I are tempted to prefix all our topics next year with: 'Tutankhamun wishes he had heard about the archaeology of ...'

Bronwen Douglas took us through the terminology of other folk in historic times – how did cultures view each other? Keryn Kefous entertained with stories of Lake Victoria and James Flexner presented another aspect of Vanuatu, the historic mission. And the famous Dr Mike Pearson will share tales of sealing with you all tonight: top class acts, all of them.

The Annual Symposium was a huge success again this year, with riveting speakers and fine debate. The Societies took up the cause for national reference collections which are in danger of being lost. Recordings will be available through the CAS website – you will all be notified when this is so. Thanks to Lucy and the Students Archaeology Association @ ANU for their efficient and friendly attention to the catering. Already the steering committee is thinking about 2015, so if you have been working up the courage to present, or to help by volunteering with admin, now is the time.

And we are justifiably proud of our contribution to National Archaeology Week 2014. This year our packed program of events attracted a diverse crowd of new friends. Our dear colleagues at the Queanbeyan Museum arranged a super launch with local dignitaries and fine food luring us into

their excellent displays. Thanks to Marilyn Folger for once again assisting the Society to make a mark and to Bec Parks for sharing some of her local research on the day. Thanks also to CAS committee member Elena Piotto for arranging a great Family Day at Questacon and Ken Heffernan for a nostalgic trip around our old haunts in Gungahlin. Also thanks to our own Landmark woman, Mary-Jane Mountain and the Friends of the National Museum of Australia; and David Kaus, who took us behind the scenes at the Museum. It is not always easy to arrange events with our colleagues in museums, but this year we managed a hat trick when Dianne Rutherford in the Australian War Memorial led us through the items from an Anzac site.

Fieldwork has flourished this year; many thanks to committee members Duncan Wright and Alister Bowen for promoting the importance of site recording for students, interested amateurs and the managers of these heritage sites. We visited several sites of significance and learned some new techniques; the results have been sent to the ACT Heritage Unit for their records. As a cultural heritage manager I know that there is rarely money in the public service budget for assessing the changes and threats to significant sites over time, so CAS is helping to protect local archaeological heritage as well as having fun and meeting new people.

CAS was successful in receiving an ACT Heritage Grant in the latest round so there will be some exciting adventures on Springbank Island, and a good step towards our dream of attracting interest in ACT's own archaeology. We thank Dr Duncan Wright in Archaeology and Anthropology at ANU and other staff members at ANU for assisting with the application and collaborating in the research and in selling the sizzle.

I speak for all the committee when I say that the assistance of Duncan, Lucy and the SAA and has made some of our dreams come true in using the talents and skills of CAS to engage with students and achieve our aims of promoting archaeology in the region.

This year we have kept abreast of the news with our CAS website and you can find us on Facebook, thanks to Lucy for timely posting and revising.

Thanks to our committee, the Canberra Archaeological Society Education Trust's annual award is now available for applications from graduate students working on projects in local archaeology or research that supports archaeology in the ACT and region. Small beginnings, but as donations are tax deductible, we are accepting contributions from you, our friends who value our archaeology and wish to support research in this region.

And many thanks to all colleagues in the committee: Presidents of vice, Alison Moir and Peter Dowling, secretary extraordinaire Lucy Blackam, who not only provides us with accurate agendas and minutes but is our membership secretary and compiles the eNews; treasurer Sally Brockwell, and members Dianne Dowling whose administrative magic sorts out the finances for the Symposium; John Bundock, our public officer and Bob Legge. Thanks also to Kathi Zarka and Aaron Melville who shared our journey early in the year.

Farewell to the Dowlings, John and me! I am sure that CAS will continue in expert hands and strengthen our ties to local researchers at ANU, our colleagues at the University of Canberra and perhaps other local institutions.

Peter and I have volunteered to be on a CAS Panel of Experts and we are delighted to welcome distinguished archaeology consultant Trish Saunders to our panel. We will all be chuffed to be asked for advice or information on matters of local archaeology and heritage.

I hope that you all take up the challenge to promote CAS and to make sure that we are seen to get credit for the great work we do. It may sound trivial, but it takes constant vigilance and persistence to make sure we don't do all the work and get none of the glory.

Thanks for having me, twice! It must be some kind of achievement to be President for the 30th Anniversary and again for the 50th.

See you in Caloundra

Helen Cooke