



Staff from the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery (NMG) and Japanese representatives from Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties, excavate a Japanese weapons pit near the Kokoda Track. Photo M Kelly, 2019, © NMG.

THEME

The Symposium theme this year is 'Mid-Century – Innovation, change and optimism'. This theme, not at first sight, ideal for application to archaeology, can be explored, for instance, by examining, archaeologically, related, major, historical themes/events that occurred in the mid-century period, say 1930s to 1960s. It could also consider the development of archaeology and perceptions of it as it relates to this period, and examine attempts to investigate little known, but important aspects of our history that need exposure. All these approaches are found in our Symposium papers.

PROGRAMME

9.30-9.35am A brief introduction explaining what the day is about, sponsors and housekeeping.

9.35-9.45 Paul House: Welcome to Country.

9.45-9.50 Richard Morrison Symposium context.

9.50-10.10 Stevie Skitmore: Hidden in plain sight: the shared landscape of Canberra's mid-century workers' camps.

10.10-10.30 Emeritus Professor Annie Clarke & Dr Sally Brockwell: Aboriginal art and the role of aviation in the promotion of the Australian national identity.

10.30-11.00 Morning Tea (self-provided in cafe)

11.00-11.20 Emeritus Professor Matthew Spriggs: The Modern Era of archaeological investigation in Australia did NOT begin on Friday 13 January 1956: A critique of the history of our archaeology.

11.20-11.40 Dr Matthew Kelly Investigating the archaeological remains of World War 2 in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

11.40-12.10 Q&A Panel of speakers

12.10- 12.30 Thank you's and Close

BOOKINGS: National Museum of Australia What's On Calendar at:

<https://www.nma.gov.au/whats-on/calendar/calendar-items/april-2026/archaeology-symposium>

Admission free - gold coin donation gratefully accepted.

BIOS and ABSTRACTS

Paul House: Welcome to Country

Paul Girrawah House has multiple First Nation ancestries from the South-East Canberra region, including the Ngambri-Ngurmal (Walgalu), Pajong (Gundungurra), Wallaballoo (Ngunnawal) and Erambie/Brungle/Hollywood (Wiradjuri) family groups. Paul acknowledges his diverse First Nation history, he particularly identifies as a descendant of *Onyong* aka *Jindoomang* from Weereewaa (Lake George) and *Henry 'Black Harry' Williams* from Namadgi who were both multilingual, essentially Walgalu-Wiradjuri speaking warriors and Wallaballoo man *William Lane* aka '*Billy the Bull*' - *Murrjinille*. Paul was born at the old Canberra hospital in the centre of his ancestral country and strongly acknowledges his First Nation matriarch ancestors, in particular his mother Dr Aunty Matilda House-Williams and grandmother, Ms Pearl Simpson-Wedge. Paul completed a Bachelor of Community Management from Macquarie University, and Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage and Management from CSU and Graduate Certificate of Management from the Australian National University (ANU). Paul provided the Welcome to Country for the 47th Opening of Federal Parliament in 2022. Paul is a member Indigenous Reference Group, NMA and member of the NGA First Nations Advisory Group. Paul is a member First Nations Advisory Committee to the Museum of Australian Democracy. Paul works on country with the ANU, First Nations Portfolio as a Cultural & Community Engagement Specialist.

Stevie Skitmore: Hidden in plain sight: the shared landscape of Canberra's mid-century workers' camps.

Stevie Skitmore is a Canberra-based archaeologist, senior associate with Extent Heritage, and PhD candidate in archaeology at the ANU. Stevie's Masters research focused on the ephemeral archaeology and lasting cultural values of the Red Hill Camp, a now heritage-listed camping place used by a local Ngambri family in the 1950s. Stevie is working with the

Anindilyakwa community in the Northern Territory on the archaeology of songlines and cultural movement.

This is a story of the individuals who built the capital of Australia. It's not a story about the politicians and civil servants; but of the builders, handymen and day labourers. It's a story of the full lives they lived whilst they built this city, in the shanty towns that they hastened together in bushland just out of sight of the meticulously planned suburbs. The archaeology of these places tells the story of an early Canberra that did not often make the news, one of both resistance and mutual aid within the shared experience of the working poor.

Emeritus Professor Annie Clarke and Dr Sally Brockwell: Aboriginal art and the role of aviation in the promotion of the Australian national identity.

Annie Clarke is an archaeologist and Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include the archaeology of Arnhem Land, the archaeology of cross-cultural engagement and colonialism, rock art and mark-making practices, ethnographic collections and objects, community archaeology, narrative and archaeology and heritage. As a Chief Investigator with the Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded Heritage of the Air Project, she analysed aviation material culture held in regional, national and international collections, including Qantas and the SFO Museum at San Francisco Airport, as well as investigating Indigenous aviation-related art and cultural practice.

Sally Brockwell is an archaeologist with research interests in the archaeology and cultural heritage of northern Australia and Island South East Asia. She was an ARC Research Associate attached to the Heritage of the Air Project in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra (UC). She assisted Professor Tracy Ireland (Lead Investigator, UC) to coordinate project research activities and, together with Annie Clarke, investigated cultural material held in regional, national and international aviation collections.

Scrabbling around in the Qantas Archives at Mascot in Sydney, with the help of curator David Crotty, we investigated the work that Qantas, as the national carrier, has undertaken to establish a particular kind of airworthy Australian national identity, entering into the modernist project through harnessing art, design, technology and architecture in the imagining and re-imagining of a connected nation.

Throughout the 20th century, Qantas increasingly co-opted Australian artists and their art, design, food and wines to promote the airline as distinctively Australian. From the mid-century onwards, Qantas also promoted Aboriginal art. The linking of Aboriginal art to the modernist project was not a new idea, but the embedding of it within mainstream Australian art was. These innovations presented, across airspace, a mobile version of identity that emphasised Australian culture. For those arriving as a visitor or migrant, this established Australia as a sophisticated, cosmopolitan nation; for departing nationals, it created a sense of familiarity and pride in the place we still call home.

Emeritus Professor Matthew Spriggs, ANU, Canberra, and Vanuatu Kaljoral Sent/Cultural Centre, Port Vila: The Modern Era of archaeological investigation in Australia did NOT begin on Friday 13 January 1956: A critique of the history of our archaeology

Matthew Spriggs is an Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at The ANU, which he joined as a staff member in 1987. He is now an Honorary Curator of Archaeology and the Honorary Librarian of the Vanuatu and Pacific Collections at the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta/Cultural Centre in Port Vila. He has conducted archaeological fieldwork in the Pacific and Island Southeast

Asia from 1975 onwards. From 2015-2020 He directed the ARC Laureate Fellowship Project "Collective Biography of Archaeology in the Pacific: A hidden history", retiring in 2021. He was awarded the Rhys Jones Medal of the Australian Archaeological Association in 2022.

Standard histories of archaeology in Australia argue for a major break in its development from 13 January 1956 when John Mulvaney began directing his first archaeological excavation. Such a rupture was required to justify including archaeology teaching in the major expansion of universities in the wake of the 1957 'Murray Report'. There was, however, no such decisive break. Archaeology in Australia has always been 'modern', in terms of adhering to the standard practices of the day. Again contrary to the accepted story, Indigenous Australians were involved in the very formation and development of archaeology from the 1830s, not just the 1960s.

Dr Matthew Kelly: Investigating the archaeological remains of World War 2 in PNG.

Matthew has been a consultant archaeologist in Australia since 1983 and has undertaken survey and excavations in Australia, the Pacific and Europe. His work has included early colonial sites in Australia, colonial and WW2 sites in PNG and iron age and Roman sites in Europe. He is a member of Australia ICOMOS and a Voting Member International Scientific Committee for ICOFORT. He is also the current editor of the journal of Australasian Historical Archaeology.

The WW2 conflict in PNG is recognised as a significant influence on the twentieth century development of Australian and PNG's identity. Much history has been written and debated since 1945 on this conflict. However, few sites related to that conflict have been investigated by archaeologists.

This paper will briefly look at four such sites that have been recently recorded by archaeologists. The paper will focus primarily on excavations undertaken on one of the battlefields along the Kokoda Track, undertaken by a multinational team of Australians, Papua New Guineans and Japanese, exemplifying new co-operation between former foes on former sites of conflict.

This symposium is supported by:

