Digging It Up Down Under
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Digging It Up Down Under
A Practical Guide to Doing Archaeology in Australia

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Published in conjunction with the World Archaeological Congress

Springer
UNDEDICATION

As usual, this book is not dedicated
to Jo Smith or Robyn Walmsley
Foreword

Digging it up Down Under is the first book in a new series of Global Cultural Heritage Manuals being published by Springer. The aim of this series is to provide the essential information needed to conduct archaeological fieldwork in various parts of the world. This series of hands-on field manuals have been written for both undergraduate and graduate students, and for emerging professionals. Each book constitutes a step-by-step guide to undertaking and successfully completing cultural heritage fieldwork in a particular country or region.

The Global Cultural Heritage Manuals Series fills the need for a cohesive series of regional field manuals for archaeologists. While there are a number of useful books that provide an introduction to archaeological techniques, these books tend to focus primarily on conditions in North America or Britain, and this makes them of limited value to archaeologists working in other parts of the world.

The Global Cultural Heritage Manuals Series fills this gap, not only through providing information specifically crafted to the ethical, legislative and environmental conditions of each region or country, but also by providing the detailed advice on the complex process of undertaking archaeological fieldwork in different parts of the world. The books in this series are structured so they guide practitioners through the entire archaeological process, from research design and obtaining funding, visas and permissions, to site recording, analysis, report writing and other forms of publication. In addition, these books are written to give a sense of what it is like to live in these countries, and to provide an introduction to national lifestyles and the character of specific archaeological communities. In Australia, for example, the archaeological community is relatively small—around 550—and this makes for quite different dynamics to those in countries such as the USA or Japan, which have much larger archaeological communities.

Perhaps archaeology’s greatest strength—and its greatest weakness—is that it can be undertaken throughout the world. From one point of view, if you can do archaeology in one country, you can do it anywhere. But, of course, this view is simplistic, as the way in which archaeology is conducted in different parts of the world can vary greatly. Certainly, legislative frameworks and ethical requirements vary enormously, as do the political contexts within which archaeology is conducted. Even basic techniques can vary according to region and if you’re not from
a particular area it can be a difficult business working your way through the local systems. Sometimes, even getting access to museum collections can seem like a huge challenge. This series will help archaeologists to address such challenges, as the authors are local archaeologists who understand the legislative, policy and ethical requirements of archaeological fieldwork, as well as the international context and constraints of culture heritage practices in their part of the world. As a result, the complete set of manuals in this Series, tackling a range of coherently spelled out issues, will provide the archaeological community worldwide with a competent overview of issues that structure any fieldwork and make archaeologists aware that the circumstances they happen to work in are only one set of conditions out of the many that their colleagues encounter in other parts of the world.

It is this interest in promoting ethical, responsible archaeology globally that made the Global Cultural Heritage Manuals Series suited to being a World Archaeological Congress (WAC) book series. WAC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only archaeological organisation with elected global representation. Membership is open to archaeologists, heritage managers, students and members of the public (see www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org). WAC is committed to promoting the scientific investigation of the past and to redressing global inequities in archaeology through scholarly programs, conferences, and publications. Perhaps most importantly within the context of this series, WAC seeks to promote ethical archaeological practice, a frank acknowledgement of the political contexts within which research is conducted, and the protection of cultural heritage worldwide. It has a special interest in helping Indigenous peoples, minorities and those living in economically disadvantaged countries to develop the measures needed to protect their cultural patrimony.

While the volumes in this series will be of value to archaeologists seeking to undertake projects or fieldwork in a foreign country, we also expect that these books will be used in archaeology and anthropology departments to deepen student understanding of archaeological practices around the world. These books should also be of use to cultural heritage professionals within each country or region, and we expect that they will be taken into the field by archaeologists and others undertaking heritage fieldwork. In addition, the techniques outlined in these books will be of use to non-government organizations, historical societies and other local community groups interested in understanding the archaeological process and recording their heritage sites responsibly.

Claire Smith, Heather Burke, Parth Chauan, Arkadiusz Marciniak
Series Editors
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Acronyms

AAA Australian Archaeological Association
AACAI Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc.
AAPA Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (Northern Territory)
AAV Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
ACT Australian Capital Territory
AHC Australian Heritage Council
AIAS Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies
AIATSIS Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIMA Australasian Institute of Maritime Archaeology
AINSE Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering
AMG Australian Map Grid
ANSTO Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
ARC Australian Research Council
ASHA Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology
ATSIC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AURA Australian Rock Art Research Association
ANU Australian National University
BP Before Present
CDMA Code-Division Multiple Access
CHM Cultural Heritage Management
CLC Central Land Council
CRM Cultural Resource Management
CST Central Standard Time
DEC Department of Environment and Conservation (New South Wales)
DNA Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EPA Environmental Protection Agency
ESR Electron Spin Resonance
EST Eastern Standard Time
GDM Geocentric Datum of Australia
GIS Geographic Information System
GPS Geographic Positioning System
ICOMOS International Council on Monuments and Sites
IFRAO International Federation of Rock Art Organisations
ILUA Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IPPA Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association
MGA Map Grid of Australia
NAS Nautical Archaeology Society
NAUI National Association of Underwater Instructors
NHMRC National Health and Medical Research Council
NLC Northern Land Council
NSW New South Wales
NT Northern Territory
NZ New Zealand
OSL Optically Stimulated Luminescence
PADI Professional Association of Diving Instructors
PFD Personal Flotation Device
PhD Doctoral Thesis/degree
PNG Papua New Guinea
QLD Queensland
RAIA Royal Australian Institute of Architects and Engineers
SA South Australia
TAS Tasmania
TL Thermoluminescence
UK United Kingdom
UNESCO United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA United States of America
U-Series Uranium Series
UTM Universal Transverse Mercator
VIC Victoria
WA Western Australia
WAC World Archaeological Congress
WST Western Standard Time
Preface
Archaeology Down Under

This book is the first in a series of cultural heritage manuals designed to function as “how-to” guides for anyone wishing to work as an archaeologist around the world. Many graduate students and early career archaeologists are eager to travel and experience archaeology as it is practiced in different countries. Underlying the practice of archaeology in any given place, however, is a great deal of background information with which a visiting practitioner needs to become familiar as quickly as possible. What is the local legislative situation? Who can you contact when looking for employment? What are the relevant codes of ethics, definitions of artifacts and sites and other forms of necessary local knowledge? Answering these questions requires at least a basic knowledge of the local frameworks for understanding archaeology, as well as the myriad idiosyncrasies of provincial practice. Digging it Up Down Under is the answer to these and many more questions as they apply to archaeology as it is currently practised in Australia. Its intent is to provide an overview of the characteristic features of archaeology “Down Under” and what professional and ethical expectations will be placed upon you if you’re seeking to work here. It is one thing to be familiar with the standard methods and techniques of archaeology as a universal discipline, but quite another to become acquainted with the background and context of how these methods are customarily used and adapted in a particular country. With this in mind, we have written this volume to help you in three ways:

• By identifying both the legal (what archaeologists are required to do) and non-legal essentials (the fundamentals for maintaining high quality professional standards) to working in Australia.
• By introducing you to the range and types of archaeological employment you can reasonably expect to find and how best to go about getting them.
• By collating the key sources of information relevant to undertaking archaeological projects, including research repositories, funding sources, and government and other specialist agencies.

As in other parts of the world, Australian archaeology has been shaped according to our individual history and the peculiar dynamics of our natural and cultural environments. This has produced a distinctive archaeology both similar to, and
different from archaeology in other parts of the world. Unlike North America or the United Kingdom, Australia has a small population (not much more than 20 million people at the time of writing). Consequently, we do not have the large numbers of professional archaeologists that exist in other parts of the world. For example, in 2005 there were only 565 paid up members of the Australian Archaeological Association*, including students and retirees. In comparison, in 2005 the Society for American Archaeology had over 7,000 members. The existence of such a small community means that archaeologists in Australia must work in a range of professional capacities and it is usual for Australian archaeologists to have skills in more than one disciplinary area, even though they will also have areas of specialization. A level of professional breadth is particularly important for consultant archaeologists, who have to recognize, and adequately record, a wide range of site types. This contrasts with the situation in the United Kingdom or North America, where archaeologists tend to specialize much more narrowly, and where the crossing of sub-disciplinary fields can be considered dubious, or even unethical.

The main opportunities for full-time employment in archaeology come from universities, museums, and government departments, while consulting is most likely to provide opportunities for casual and temporary work. Archaeologists in universities work in either a teaching or research capacity, or both. While there are occasional appointments for research fellows, whose main task is to conduct research in their chosen field of interest, most university posts are for lecturers, who teach undergraduate courses, supervise postgraduate students and conduct independent research. Both lecturers and research fellows normally possess a PhD in archaeology.

When working in a museum, the task of an archaeologist is either that of a curator, who manages and cares for collections, or a researcher. A curator needs to have a minimum of a good Honours degree in archaeology, normally with a museum specialization, but research positions usually are filled by people with PhDs. Archaeologists working in museums deal with various aspects of maintaining the museum’s collections, such as liaising with other archaeologists who have conducted excavations and may wish to deposit material, or with researchers who wish to study the museum’s collections. They are also involved in liaising with members of the public, researching exhibitions and conducting independent research projects. The role of museums is important to archaeology, of course, since it is through museum displays that many people obtain their knowledge of Australia’s past. Thus, these exhibits inform public perceptions of Australia’s Indigenous population, as well as of our colonial origins (which were much more multi-cultural than has often been depicted) as well as perceptions of the value and uses of archaeology itself.

In recent years, there has been an increased call for archaeologists to mediate between the needs of development and the desire to preserve our cultural heritage as much as possible. This work is usually undertaken on a consultancy basis and is generically referred to as cultural heritage or cultural resource management. Cultural resource management is a major avenue for both full-time and
part-time/casual work in Australia, as archaeologists can be involved in a variety of consultancies, from recording and assessing the importance of sites and undertaking emergency excavations prior to development, to devising protection schemes for sites and artifacts and creating interpretive materials. The practical application of heritage legislation varies greatly from state to state (for more information, see Chapter 5), however, which in some places means that there is an overall lack of funding/commitment to proper site mitigation in the face of development. There are two main repercussions to this: firstly, there is a general lack of “dig bum” jobs on Australian sites, in contrast to the situation in other countries with substantial and recurrent funding for large-scale excavation projects. Secondly, it also means that you are much less likely to get a job in some states—those states with a less stringent commitment to cultural heritage issues, such as South Australia, for example, have relatively few consultancy opportunities, whereas those with stricter controls, such as New South Wales and Victoria, generate a large market for archaeological assessment and excavation work. Contacting consultancy firms in the capital cities is your best bet if you want to earn casual money as an archaeologist in Australia.

If you intend to work as a consultant archaeologist, bear in mind that, particularly in the CHM/CRM arena, all archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to be sufficiently well qualified to carry out a job to acceptable professional standards. Poor quality or ill-informed assessments damage the archaeological heritage and the professional standing of the archaeological community. The production of cultural heritage reports involves making assessments of significance (see Chapter 9), which itself requires a firm understanding of archaeology as a discipline, a knowledge of the range of sites which exist across Australia, the intent of cultural heritage legislation, the management policies of the relevant State authorities, and an understanding of site preservation and management measures. For this reason, the minimum qualifications considered adequate for undertaking a cultural heritage consultancy in Australia are an Honours degree in archaeology or a closely related field, or some other form of postgraduate qualification in archaeology, such as a diploma or Master of Letters. A three-year undergraduate Bachelor’s degree alone is not considered sufficient, even to be considered as a trainee archaeologist (see AACAI, 2005). The majority of Australian archaeologists abide by these rules, although they are professional recommendations, not legal requirements. In some circumstances, these requirements can be even more stringent. In New South Wales, for example, an historical archaeological excavation director has to have three years professional experience, as well as a tertiary degree or graduate diploma in archaeology or a related discipline (see Chapter 7).

Because industrial, commercial and residential development is governed by cultural heritage legislation in each state and territory, consultants work closely with archaeologists in the various government departments whose job is to administer this legislation. These departments are responsible for maintaining registers of sites, establishing guidelines for best practice, assessing consultants’ reports and liaising with developers and members of the public. Archaeologists employed
in these departments also conduct research projects related to the management needs of their particular department. Increasingly, Indigenous groups are employing archaeologists to research native title claims or to develop cultural heritage management programs and interpretive materials for cultural centres or tourism ventures.

It is more difficult to quantify the volunteer opportunities that are available in Australian archaeology. There is no central place that you can visit to find out about volunteer opportunities here, although many consultants recognize the special niche that volunteers on archaeological fieldwork can fulfil. According to the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists (AACAI)*—one of the main professional bodies for archaeological practice in Australia—volunteers can expect to be trained in a range of generic tasks, such as excavation, the washing or sorting of artifacts, and simple cataloguing procedures. Ethically, the site supervisor cannot ask a volunteer to take on work that is normally the responsibility of an assistant or specialist (AACAI 1995, www.aacai.com.au/policies/volunteers.html).

In theory, while all archaeological projects could probably benefit from volunteer skills, in reality the opportunities to take on volunteers will probably be limited to urban areas and the large excavation and recovery projects that are undertaken in these places. Some Government departments, such as the NSW Heritage Office*, may advertise archaeological projects that are willing to take on volunteer labor, and the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology* is currently investigating the feasibility of establishing a volunteer register. Museums are the institutions that most often run formal volunteer programs, although some conservation services, such as ArtLab* in Adelaide, are also often willing to take on and train volunteers. Another place to try is the Australasian Institute of Maritime Archaeology (AIMA)* website, which sometimes advertises volunteer opportunities in maritime archaeology.

Taken together, this implies three potential uses for the information contained in this book, depending on whether you are:

• A volunteer who would like to experience archaeology by working on a real site. It doesn’t matter whether you’re a specialist (i.e. archaeologist) or not: volunteers are making an increasingly popular contribution to archaeological fieldwork.
• An itinerant archaeologist interested in short-term work in Australia, as part of a broader cultural experience.
• A new graduate, either from Australia or overseas, interested in obtaining permanent work as a professional archaeologist.

Each of you will be able to draw different levels of knowledge from this book. For volunteers and visitors to Australia we have included the essential background to the development of archaeology in Australia, and the basics of what each kind of archaeology can offer. For specialists and new graduates there is considerable detail on the ethical issues confronting practitioners in Australia and the standards that must be adhered to when practicing as a professional archaeologist in this country.
Indigenous, Aboriginal or . . . ?

The words we use are powerful, and if you plan to work with Indigenous Australians you are going to have to watch your language. Language can be used to hurt people, not only through labelling and description, but also through silence and omission (Butler, 1997). Moreover, words that may be acceptable in one part of the world may be considered disrespectful in another, even though expressed in the same language. While Australian English has colloquial variants that are quite different to British or North American English (see, for example, Mark Moore’s tips in Chapter 4), there are other differences that arise from our specific political circumstances. The most significant of these is the use of Indigenous archaeology as a synonym for prehistoric archaeology (rather than as a kind of ethical prehistoric archaeology, which is the way it is used in North America). The word “prehistory” is problematic, because it is based on a fundamental distinction between “history” (written by British invaders) and “prehistory” (the province of non-literate pre-invasion populations), which masks the co-existence of written and unwritten history in many parts of the country (see Burney, 1999; Craven, 1999; McNiven & Russell, 2005). Use of the word “prehistory” in an Australian context creates an artificial boundary across a period of continuous transition and fractures the temporal reckoning of the continent into a patchwork of colonial encounters.

Indigenous scholars regularly point out that much of what passes for “normal” discourse in an academic situation is actually the discourse of colonialism (see, for example, Craven, 1999; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999). The British colonizers of Australia, for instance, used the term “Aboriginal” to collapse the cultural and geographic boundaries of more than 600 diverse Indigenous groups, each of which had its own political system, laws and language, into a single category. The homogeneity implied by such terms facilitated implementation of the Australian government’s policy of transforming a wide variety of Indigenous sovereign nations into ethnic minorities within the dominant state. This is reflected in the titles used by some state government departments, such as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (DAARE)*. Through such language, diversity and vitality was replaced with an imagined homogeneity and an implied stasis, a factor in the loss of identity that occurred as a result of invasion. Many Indigenous people, especially those from the Torres Strait who are ethnically and culturally very different to the Aboriginal populations of the mainland, resent this homogenization. They have redressed this to some extent, as is evident in the naming of government bodies, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)*. Indigenous groups have also redressed this through adopting their own terms to describe themselves. In some parts of Australia Aboriginal people opt to call themselves by more specific regionalized names that recognize their autonomy and reflect original naming traditions prior to European contact. “Koori” and its variations (“Coorie”, “Goorie” and “Koorie”), for example, is a word in many south-eastern Australian languages that means “man” or “people”, and has been widely adopted throughout New South Wales and Victoria by Aboriginal groups. In Queensland, Aboriginal people call themselves “Murri” or “Murray”,
while in Tasmania people refer to themselves as “Palawa”. In Western Australia they use the term “Nyungar”, or “Nyoongar”, and people in South Australia use “Nunga”, a term linguistically affiliated to the Western Australian words. Often, people prefer to be referred to by linguistic affiliation (i.e. their language group), as this reinforces their ties to country. In a broader political context the term “Indigenous” is sometimes used, although “Aboriginal” is still preferred by many people on the grounds that “Indigenous” reinforces the colonial division that equated Europeans with culture and Indigenous peoples with nature (Vincent Branson personal communication, February 12th, 2006). In addition, in parts of northern Australia Aboriginal people may call themselves “blackfellas”, and Europeans “whitefellas”, but you need to have been working with people closely for a long time before you could be sure you were using the term correctly, as these are terms that can only be used by people who exist inside the social structures, not by observers.

Each group has a number of terms they can draw upon, according to the particular situation. People from the Torres Strait, for example, refer to themselves as “Torres Strait Islanders” or “Islanders”, but also identify according to the island they are from, their clan grouping, and, in at least one case, in relation to an ancestral village (Mabuiag) (Bruno David, email communication, February 11th, 2006). It makes sense that the choice of term will vary according to the relationship between the person speaking and their audience: there is little point referring to yourself in relationship to an ancestral village or island if the person you are talking to has no knowledge of these places. Thus, nomenclature is a political choice not only in general terms, but also in regards to the particular situation.

The convention we have adopted throughout this book is to use “Indigenous” when we write of issues, such as cultural and intellectual property rights, that have an impact on all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Following the increasing practice of Indigenous authors (e.g. Craven, 1999; Smith, 1999; various papers in Smith & Wobst, 2005), we use the term “Indigenous peoples”. The capital “I” emphasizes the nationhood of individual groups, while use of the plural “peoples” internationalizes Indigenous experiences, issues and struggles (Smith, 1999:114–115). We use the term “Aboriginal” to refer to Aboriginal people from mainland Australia, and “Torres Strait Islander” to refer to people from the Torres Strait Islands. When referring to specific groups, we refer to language group (e.g. Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Jawoyn). When several language groups are involved we use the regional term used by local Aboriginal people themselves (e.g. Murri, Ngunga, Palawa) and when that kind of term does not exist, we refer to people in terms of their geographic location (e.g. Barunga people). The basic principle is to show respect by using the terms that people use to describe themselves.

The Structure of This Book

Writing a book about all facets of archaeology in Australia is not an easy task; keeping it within a reasonable word limit is even less so. As a result each chapter
is, of necessity, relatively brief and tackles only the key issues that we think you need to be aware of. To deal with this inevitable brevity we have included two sections at the end of each chapter to help direct your knowledge and broaden it in specific areas. The first, “References and Further Reading”, points you in the direction of detailed scholarly and theoretical works which complement the background information provided in each chapter. Seminal archaeological studies and papers have been included here. The second, “Key Guides and Resources”, is intended to be more of a “library” of practical advice. This section contains a range of the most useful on-line and print resources relating to various aspects of archaeology, fieldwork and assessment. A third resource is Appendix 1, the “Archaeology Yellow Pages”. This collates contact details for the key organizations relevant to archaeological practice in Australia, including all of the recommended contacts mentioned by name in the text. Throughout this book an asterisk (*) is used the first time we mention these important points of contact. Finally, in order to teach some of the lessons of “real” archaeology, we have included a range of handy hints and helpful advice from professional archaeologists around Australia. Some may be a bit tongue-in-cheek, but all of it demonstrates what archaeology is really like “Down Under”.

Acknowledgments. The genteel life of the scholar seems to be slipping away. Throughout the world, academics are working in increasingly pressed scholarly environments, and this makes it difficult for people to find the time to engage in the discussion and debate that is the core of any scholarly enterprise. Therefore, we are very grateful to those people who took the time and trouble to assist us with various aspects of this book. Firstly, we thank the people who gave us their tips and advice: Mitch Allen, Victoria Alvarado, Jane Balme, Kirstin Brett, Mark Darby, Ines Domingo, Joe Flatman, Bradley Garrett, Denis Gojak, Alice Gorman, Daryl Guse, Ken Isaacson, Gail Higginbottom, Jeannette Hope, Wayne Johnston, Paulyn Kerr, Julie Kohlhagen, Lyn Leader-Elliott, Ian Lilley, Jane Lydon, George Merriman, Mark Moore, Kate Morse, Bobby McAskill, Jo McDonald, Angie McGowan, Sam McKay, Paul Marks, Laurie Obbink, Colin Pardoe, Adam Reed, Mal Ridges, Di Smith, Pam Smith, Emily Smyth, Katrina Stankowski, Iain Stuart, Sean Ulm, Natalie Vinton, Lynley Wallis, Esmée Webb, Roy and Mitch Willis, Ken Wilson, and Richard Woolfe. While we solicited many of these tips, others came in response to a call on the AUSARCH list-server. Secondly, we would like to thank people who helped with other facets of this book. Elizabeth Bradshaw, Iain Davidson, Joe Flatman, Peter Gesner, Yvonne Kaiser-Glass, Jack Golson, Jeremy Green, Gary Jackson, Laila Haglund, Glen Ingram, Sam McKay, Sally May, Vincent Megaw, David Parham, Donald Pate, Nathan Richards, Katrina Stankowski, Iain Stuart, Lynley Wallis, Duncan Wright and Richard Wright commented on draft chapters or gave us advice or assistance on various aspects of the book. Parth Chauhan and Bruno David kindly reviewed the entire text. Two of our students have helped with key facets of this book: Zandria Farrell thought up the title, and Daniel Gale drew figures 2.3, 2.5 and 2.9. The photo of the grieving mother in Figure 6.1 is published
with the kind permission of Avis Gale, Amy Levai and June McInerney (Kunyi), Shereen Rankin and Silvio Apponyi. The axe grinding grooves in Figure 6.1 are published courtesy of the Toomelah Aboriginal Land Council, and with thanks to June Ross for supplying the image. The other images in Figure 6.1 are published with thanks to Phyllis Wiynjoroc, Peter Manabaru, Jimmy Wesan and the Barunga-Wugularrr Community Government Council and the image in Figure 7.1 is published courtesy of Maggie Tucumba, of Weemol community, NT. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, for two small grants that supported the preparation of this book.

References and Further Reading

1
A Brief History of Australian Archaeology

The professional practice of archaeology in Australia is a relatively recent endeavor, only crystallising into a distinct discipline in the 1960s and 1970s. It was during this period that Australian archaeology was first taught at Australian universities, that professional organizations dedicated to Australian archaeology were formed, that Federal and State legislation was enacted to protect archaeological sites and artifacts, and that employment opportunities opened up, either in government departments and other institutions or in cultural heritage management. Since then, there has been an enormous increase in the number of recorded sites, as well as increasing evidence for their environmental and cultural diversity, a growing understanding of the antiquity of Aboriginal occupation within Australia and an increasing interest in colonial (historical) and maritime archaeology. However, there is still much work to be done in all areas of the country. Australian archaeology today covers a variety of interests: from Indigenous archaeology focusing on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander occupation of Australia over the last 50,000 years, to historical archaeology which deals with the last few hundred years since colonial contact.

Prior to the professionalization of the discipline, most archaeological observations were made by amateurs, explorers and professionals from other disciplines, such as geology and anthropology. It could even be argued that the first disciplinary observations of Australia's past were made, not by scientists or professionals of any kind, but by its Indigenous occupants, who have lived here for around 50,000 years and who routinely interpret the world around them in terms of its material remains (see Chapter 2). In the 17th and 18th centuries, however, this long Indigenous tradition was paralleled by the observations and activities of explorers and early colonists. The first of these was English officer, William Dampier, who made astute observations about how to read the lifestyle of Indigenous Australians from food remains when he visited the shores of Western Australia in 1688 and 1699 (Dampier, 1699 [1906], cited in Horton, 1991:7). English explorers, such as James Cook and George Bass, were also interested in understanding the lifestyles of the exotic inhabitants of this new land, and made similar observations on their voyages some seventy to one hundred years later. The strangeness of these new encounters and a desire to understand "man" in the "pure state" of nature fired the colonial
imagination, and the recording of observations of an archaeological or anthropological nature, and the collection of artifacts became integral to the acquisition of these new lands. Building on this, the early governors of the Colony of New South Wales carried out the first archaeological excavations (Horton, 1991:3-5). Human burials were a focus of these early excavations, as researchers sought to determine whether the treatment of the dead by Indigenous Australians showed evidence of conviction in an afterlife, and thus of religious belief (Horton, 1991:5).

The first serious attempt to estimate the antiquity of Indigenous occupation was made in 1884 by Reverend Peter MacPherson, who tentatively suggested 400 years on the basis of his excavations of oven-mounds and associated stone circles in Meredith, Victoria (see Horton, 1991:34-43). A few years later, Statham's examination of the geomorphology and stratigraphy of shell mounds excavated for road works in New South Wales suggested an occupation date of 1,770 years (Horton, 1991:50). Since this time, estimates of the age of occupation of Australia have doubled on a regular basis (see Table 1.1).

Today, it is generally accepted that Indigenous people occupied the Australian continent by 50,000 years before present (BP), although dates much older than this are sometimes advocated (e.g. Adcock et al., 2001; Fullagar et al., 1996). There are many sites dated to between 30,000 BP and 40,000 BP (e.g. Balme, 1995; Balme...
et al., 1978; O’Connor, 1995; Pearce & Barbetti, 1981), at which point radiocarbon
dating becomes very difficult. Earliest dates can be pushed back to around 53,000
BP on the assumption that the first colonizers are likely to have come to Australia at
the time of lowest sea level, and this is supported by thermoluminescence (TL) dates
at Malakununja II, in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory (Roberts et al., 1990) and
optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dates from Deaf Adder Gorge, Northern
Territory (Roberts et al., 1993). Even earlier dates have been proposed using other
dating techniques (e.g. Adcock et al., 2001), but it is too soon to tell if these claims
will survive scrutiny (for more detail on the Indigenous colonization of Australia,
including dates and major sites, see Chapters 2 and 6) (see Figure 1.1).

1.1. The Rise of Professional Archaeology in Australia

While archaeological activities had been undertaken since the first colonisation
by the British (and before that in Aboriginal techniques for interpreting human
behaviour from material remains), it took some time for archaeology to develop in
Australia as a distinct discipline. This process involved a number of key individuals
and events, depicted in Table 1.2. This timeline has been developed to identify
“firsts” in the historical development of Australian archaeology, not only in terms
of disciplinary “firsts” but also in terms of key players, and how they contributed
to the professionalization of the discipline in Australia.

Australia’s first eminent archaeologist was Vere Gordon Childe, the Foundation
Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at Edinburgh University, from 1927 to 1946
and Professor of Prehistoric European Archaeology at the University of London
from 1946 until his retirement in 1956. His book *The Dawn of European Civi­
lization* had a profound influence on British and European archaeology for several
decades. In 1957, after an absence of about 35 years, Childe returned to Australia
and died soon afterwards (Mulvaney, 1990 [1957]:161). In this same year Derek
John Mulvaney taught the first course in Australian and Pacific archaeology at the
University of Melbourne*. Mulvaney was appointed to a lecturing post in 1954
and had been a tutor in Greek and Roman history from 1949 to 1951. In 1960
Isabel McBryde was appointed to a lectureship in Prehistory and Ancient His­
tory at the University of New England* in New South Wales. Other appointments
followed, primarily in Indigenous archaeology, but also in historical archaeology,
most notably with the appointment of Graham Connah as Head of the Department
of Prehistory and Archaeology at the University of New England. The first courses
in historical archaeology were taught during the 1970s, keying into a nascent
interest of the Australian public to understand their colonial heritage. Maritime
archaeology was introduced into Australian universities in the mid 1990s.

The appointment of academics with a commitment to teaching and research­
ing Australian archaeology framed the development of archaeology in two ways.
Firstly, these appointments were necessary to the establishment of various sub­
disciplines within archaeology, since they were the means by which these fields
of study could be made available to students. Secondly, the increased emphasis on
1. A Brief History of Australian Archaeology

**Figure 1.1.** The oldest archaeological sites in Australia.
## TABLE 1.2. Timeline of the historical development of Australian archaeology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>Aboriginal people interpret the material remains of human behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1699</td>
<td>William Dampier makes the first written records of archaeological observations in his analyses of Aboriginal campsites in WA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Captain Arthur Phillip and John Hunter open Aboriginal graves to determine burial practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Major Thomas Mitchell discovers <em>Diprotodon</em> bones in Wellington Caves, NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Vere Gordon Childe born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Walter Roth publishes the three volume <em>The Queensland Aborigines</em>, the first detailed description of Aboriginal material culture and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901–1902</td>
<td>Baldwin Spencer’s and Frank Gillen’s expedition to Central Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Norman Tindale begins work at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Frederick McCarthy begins work at the Australian Museum in Sydney.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>First archaeological excavation in Australia undertaken at Devon Downs by Herbert Hale and Norman Tindale, of the SA Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Norman Tindale leads Board of Anthropological Research expeditions to Central Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Donald Thomson publishes <em>The Seasonal Factor in Human Culture</em>, the first explicit ethnoarchaeological study in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>American–Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land, led by Charles Mountford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>John Mulvaney appointed as a tutor in Greek and Roman history, in the Department of Ancient History at the University of Melbourne, Victoria. Appointed to a lectureship in 1954.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to late 1950s</td>
<td>First state and government legislation to protect cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Edmund Gill publishes the first archaeological radiocarbon dating in Australia, of a midden near Warrnambool, Victoria, dated at 500 BP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Vere Gordon Childe returns to Australia for the first time in about 35 years abroad, and commits suicide soon after in the Blue Mountains, NSW. First course in Australian and Pacific Prehistory taught by John Mulvaney at Melbourne University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Isabel McBryde appointed to the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of New England, New South Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1961</td>
<td>Judy Birmingham, Vincent Megaw, and Richard Wright leave Britain to take up appointments in archaeology at Sydney University; all begin field work in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1963</td>
<td>John Mulvaney excavates at Kenniff Cave, Qld. Establishes the Pleistocene occupation of Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Interim Council formed for Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. First Principal was Frederick McCarthy. Confirmed by AIAS Act 1964, which was replaced by the AIATSIS Act 1989.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Richard Wright establishes the first course in Australian archaeology at Sydney University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Rhys Jones arrives in Australia, to join the Department of Anthropology, Sydney University. Western Australian Government introduces first underwater cultural heritage legislation (later amended to Maritime Archaeology Act 1973) to protect sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Rhys Jones publishes on the archaeological sequence at Rocky Cape, Tasmania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Jim Bowler discovers Lake Mungo I, dated to 26,000 BP, the world’s oldest cremation. Later re-dated to 46–50,000 BP. Rhys Jones publishes on the colonization of Australia and Tasmania, establishing that it was a fairly rapid process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>