

# Chapter 41

## Australia

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Australia's first archaeological observations were made by early explorers and colonists or noted by observers primarily working in other disciplines (Smith and Burke 2007, p. 1). The first excavation in Australia was undertaken by the governors of the Colony of New South Wales with a focus on human burials (Horton 1991, pp. 3–5), while the first to employ the method of stratigraphic analysis were anthropologists Herbert Hale and Norman Tindale, who undertook archaeological excavations at Devon Downs in 1929 (Hale and Tindale 1930).

Formal archaeological work in Australia began in the 1950s when John Mulvaney returned from courses at Cambridge University and introduced archaeological study into the Australian curriculum (Mulvaney 2011). Mulvaney began work on a number of archaeological excavations around Australia and instructed and mentored a number of students who would become leaders in the field, including Isabel McBryde, Jim Allen, and Ian Glover.

In the 1970s, a series of political circumstances spurred by a confluence between the Aboriginal land rights movement and public environmental concerns led to the creation of state heritage legislation. After this, the amount of archaeological work conducted in Australia dramatically increased, both with development of heritage surveys required by legislation and in academic circles, with several universities opening archaeology departments.

While Australia's first department of archaeology had been instituted at the University of Sydney in 1948, the focus was not specific to Australian archaeology. Later, archaeologists with an Australian focus arrived at the university, with Vincent Megaw and Richard Wright arriving in 1961 and Rhys Jones in 1963. John Mulvaney was appointed to the History Department University of Melbourne in 1953, later moving to ANU. Isabel McBryde took up the first titled position in Prehistory and

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Ancient History at the University of New England, Armidale, in 1960, while Jack Golson was appointed to the Anthropology Department at Australian National University in 1961, which was then just moving into the field of archaeology.

Since this time, Australia has grown a thriving discipline covering a range of research topics. The nature and timing of human settlement in the continent has been a long standing topic of interest in Australian archaeology, with the first estimate being made in 1884 by Reverend Peter MacPherson, who postulated an age of 400 years BP for human arrival on the basis of his excavations in Victoria (Horton 1991, pp. 34–43). This date was quickly superseded with the commonly accepted date of human arrival in Australia now being an estimated 50,000 years BP (see Hiscock 2008, p. 1). The archaeology of the periods of European contact and industrialization has developed into a major field.

The first Australian book dedicated to an overview of archaeological field methods was written in 1983 by Graham Connah (see Connah 1983), which was followed by a more detailed treatment of field methods and related topics by Heather Burke and Claire Smith (see Burke and Smith 2004). The method of ethnographic analogy has often been employed in Australian archaeology and in many cases has served to inform our interpretation of the past (Hiscock 2008, pp. 268–285).

One of Australia's strengths in archaeology has been its analysis of sociopolitical issues, particularly the reflexive analysis of its relationship as a discipline with Aboriginal people (see Burke et al. 1994). This has evolved from simple consultation in the early days to numerous community-based research projects, informed, and sometimes initiated by Indigenous people (Greer et al. 2002). This has begun to transform archaeology in Australia from a field that studied the history of indigenous people to one that cannot only learn more about the past but also benefit contemporary peoples. Employment in cultural heritage management increased dramatically in the early twenty-first century, in response to the legislative requirements of a mining boom in Australia. In 2012, there were over 1,000 members of the Australian Archaeological Association.

*More information on Australian archaeology can be found in EGA under Australasian Historical Archaeology, Australia: Cultural Heritage Management Education, Australia: Domestic Archaeological Heritage Management Law, Australia: Indigenous Cultural Property Return; and on Australian archaeologists at Allen (Jim), Burke (Heather), Golson (Jack), Jones (Rhys Maengwyn), McBryde (Isabel), Mulvaney, John) and Smith (Claire).*