

Judy Birmingham in conversation

TRACY IRELAND and MARY CASEY

The following is an edited set of recorded conversations with Judy Birmingham held between late 2004 and November 2006. Over several morning and afternoon teas, or while Judy was working in her lab, we recorded our rambling discussions which ranged across every aspect of archaeological practice in Australia, our shared experiences at the University of Sydney, and working in historical archaeology in Australia. Judy read the transcripts of the conversations and added ideas, points she had forgotten and people she had missed mentioning. As Judy's former students and long-time colleagues in the fields of historical archaeology and heritage management, we taped these conversations as a record and celebration of her career and her unique place in the history of Australian archaeology.

THE BEGINNINGS...

TI: Can you tell us what it was like in 1961 to pack up your life in England and move to Australia?

JB: It was interesting. When I was at university, ten years before, I was just hearing something about immigration on the radio and apparently the 1960s were a big time for immigration. But back in the 1950s certainly none of my contemporaries would have dreamt of going to Australia. Everybody went to the States, some to Venezuela, nobody went to Canada, and some went to Jamaica. There were IN places and there were NO GO places and Sydney was definitely NO GO. But I was at that stage married to a somewhat difficult person, a copywriter, and he worked for somebody quite famous in London. In fact I met him because of Fay Weldon, who I was at university with, who was also a copywriter; he was working in her agency and she said to me at sometime 'you might like Michael...'

When I finished my degree at the Institute of Archaeology, [James] Stewart [Professor of Archaeology, University of Sydney] had written to Max Mallowan, my professor, and said he needed someone in his new department. He had Basil Hennessy for the Bronze Age of Cyprus, and he himself did some prehistory of Cyprus and he wanted an Iron Age specialist. So Max said he did have someone. Max said to me 'well there you are, there is an offer in Sydney, a senior lectureship and you might like it'! I sort of thought about it. I didn't even mention it for about six weeks then finally one evening I said to Michael (my first husband)—'there is a job going in Sydney'. He said 'well that is a funny thing—Sydney is the one place I could work as a copywriter outside London'. When one is young and married to difficult people you always think of things that will please them. We said, 'well if we don't like it, we can always come back'. So off we went!

We set sail from Tilbury on the *Himalaya*. We did not have much to sell up or anything—we only had a rented a flat in town. I thought it was quite an exciting thing to do by that stage. I just remember that the trip on the *Himalaya* was amazing. We stopped off in Ceylon [Sri Lanka] and went up to Kandi, it was a special day tour. But above all, we arrived at Alexandria very late at night, I remember hanging over the railing, the rain was dripping down, people were everywhere, and in the middle of it all came this strange procession. It was in fact my professor, Jim Stewart, being carried on board because he was very sick and he was brought on board with Eve Stewart, his wife, and Betty Cameron, his secretary. On they came. I of course had never met them before and Michael immediately took against the whole situation.

After we arrived Jim Stewart moved immediately to his place at Bathurst [200km west of Sydney] and decided to run the Department of Archaeology from there. After he had come back from Japan and Singapore [after WWII] he promptly moved into his family estate 'Mt Pleasant', near Bathurst, and had it all done up, although the rain still kept coming in and we had to put buckets everywhere. But that was nothing to me. When I was at the Institute of Archaeology in Regents Park [London] it was exactly the same; the room where we had quite a few of our classes always leaked like a sieve if it rained. Jim Stewart wanted us all to go up to Bathurst.

TI: How did this situation work?

JB: Well, we had to drive up there for the weekend. Stewart had chosen the days for the Archaeology lectures—Monday, Wednesday and Friday—which meant of course we could not do a long weekend. I think the smart people chose Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday... So we were supposed to drive up there quite often. The time at Bathurst was quite amazing, with an estate management structure reminiscent of colonial days. Fortunately, the English are used to eccentrics anyway so there did not seem anything odd about it. Jim Stewart was also known as a great character within the university.

TI: Were you the only woman in the department?

JB: Technically yes, apart from Betty Cameron the secretary. The appointment of women especially to senior academic positions at Sydney was slow—I only remember Marjorie Jacobs (History) and perhaps Leonie Kramer (English Lit) in those early years. Jim Stewart's wife Eve, an excellent draughtswoman, was around a lot drawing Cypriot pots and sherds for Jim. She had earlier been a University employee, but had to resign when she married Jim, something she resented hugely. Jim appointed me primarily as a specialist in the Cypriot Iron Age, thus completing the Cypriot coverage (Jim—Early Bronze Age; Basil—Middle and Late BA). Vincent Megaw was appointed for his skills in the European Bronze and especially Iron Ages. [Alexander] Cambitiglou was appointed a bit later to replace Dale Trendall's expertise in classical vase painting studies...

TI: Were many women involved in archaeology?

JB: In Australia I don't think there were many before 1960—Elsie Bramell is the textbook example of the archaeological

glass ceiling for talented women when, after her marriage to Fred McCarthy, she had to quit her position at the Australian Museum (1941). From 1960 on women began to infiltrate prehistoric areas—Jo Flood, for example, and increasingly in Anthropology like Annette Hamilton. In the UK conversely, especially in Near Eastern archaeology, there was such a long tradition of strong and talented women from Gertrude Bell on, for example Dorothy Garrod with her work at Mt Carmel, and Kathleen Kenyon, Joan du Plat Taylor, Veronica Seton Williams and so on who were all at the London Institute of Archaeology in the 1950s. The Institute was pretty exciting then since its male staff also included Max Mallowan, Mortimer Wheeler, Fred Zeuner, Shepherd Frere and of course Gordon Childe.

TI: Did you know Childe?

JB: Yes, but only in the way that a student is slightly acquainted with their lecturers. I wish I had done more European prehistory and had more interaction with his incredible mind but he was primarily a Europeanist. I did attend his lectures at the Institute, bumped into him occasionally in the leaky old Regents Park building, and watched his idiosyncratic driving style in his aged convertible Ford. As an Aegaeonist I was most familiar with his ideas as presented in his *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (1952). His clear presentations of the functionalist cultural evolutionary position cleared the way for the New Archaeology of the 1960s, and all that has followed from that. He came out here and died in the Blue Mountains in 1957. He had been, I think, staying with Jim Stewart at Mount Pleasant about that time.

TI: Was Max Mallowan an inspirational character or was he remote?

JB: I don't know that Max was exactly inspirational, although as a supervisor uncompromisingly editing my drafts he taught me a lot about writing. He was a meticulous scholar, and at that time at least, when he was excavating the Nimrud Palace and the ivories, he was absorbed in the study and also the conservation of the huge collection of ivories. The recovery, cleaning and re-assembly of these pieces, shattered in the seventh-century sack of Sargon's palace, occupied many volunteers thousands of hours. At that time I was still involved with the classical world—although even then working at its fringes in Cyprus and Turkey, but I was already feeling for the kind of archaeology I really wanted to do—perhaps more an archaeology of peripheries. The study of imperial systems and the elite artefacts at their centres, spectacular as they were, were always absorbing, but not inspirational. Max himself was very much of the old school—he had a marvellous way of saying 'What? What?' at the end of ordinary statements, but he was always warm, kind, and helpful to his students in a surprised kind of way.

MC: Did you know Agatha [Christie, Mallowan's wife]?

JB: Well again, it wasn't the sort of informal matinees Australian archaeological students today might enjoy—tutorials as well as social occasions were far more formal. Agatha—a hugely wealthy woman even then—was, unlike Max, always a distant sort of person, perhaps partly from shyness. I can remember ceremonial lunches once a year, or once a term, perhaps, when Professor Mallowan would entertain his students at the incredibly exclusive Athenaeum

Club in Piccadilly. I remember us students sitting, totally over-awed, each side of this long table, Max at one end chatting and beaming, Agatha at the other, quiet, a little remote, and it always seemed to me silently speculating on a new plot.

MC: Did you dig in Iraq with Mallowan?

JB: No, I never dug in Iraq, although I would rather like to have had the experience. My basic excavation training was with Shepherd Frere at Verulamium for several seasons: the combination of Frere and a superb Roman site was the best possible training then. I thought he was a fantastic field archaeologist. Verulamium was very instructive—I also worked in the pottery shed there. I was quite good at organising the huge amount of pottery common on all Roman sites, and have always been interested in finds analyses. My research at the Institute in the late 1950s was on Cyprus, in that I had ancient Greek, so I also excavated there. Later I went to Iraq as well as Turkey (1955), and I dug with Jimmy Mellaart in Turkey then.

MC: At Catal Huyuk? Did you see the Dorak hoard?

JB: No. He told me about it though—it was always an intriguing story! Then I continued my archaeological journey east, digging with Charles Burney near Tabriz, at the Early Bronze Age site Yunuk Tepe.

TI: Did you dig in Cyprus?

JB: Yes in 1951 or 1952 while still at St Andrews [Scotland] I dug with T. B. Mitford [Lecturer at St Andrews] at Kouklia, the Bronze Age Aphrodite site in old Paphos—not the later site Dick Green is digging in New Paphos. That was my first excavation—it inspired me to go on to the London Institute of Archaeology after I left St Andrews. I went to Turkey in 1955 as Scholar at the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, when Seton Lloyd was director and Jimmy Mellaart I think as deputy. As Scholar I was doing a study of Anatolian metal work—I went all over Turkey that year. Later I excavated with Kathleen Kenyon in Jerusalem and visited Jericho, where Basil [Hennessy] had been.

TI: Once you came to Australia did you continue to work in the Near East?

JB: Yes, for over a decade. After my appointment in April 1961, I had sabbatical leave in 1963, and worked with Kenyon at Jerusalem. I travelled through Egypt, as well as Turkey, Iraq and Iran to places I knew I was going to be lecturing on. The big problem was that I got here in June 1961, and Professor Stewart died very soon after in February 1962 so I was here only for six months while he was alive. The Department of Archaeology which he was setting up was in its infancy then, and Alexander Cambitoglou, deeply committed to traditional classical archaeology, was appointed Head of Department soon after. Of course I wanted to continue in the Near East—the problem was that I, a pretty inexperienced new arrival, had no idea of how to set up an overseas excavation from Sydney. I had little effective support, either here, or in the country to which I would be going, and no experience of raising community or public funds such as Cambitoglou had from Bryn Mawr. I was invited to join with an American excavation in Cyprus, but this fell through. In the late 1960s I joined Alexander's expedition to Zagora in Andros, Greece, as field director, a really interesting excavation.

By about 1972 I took leave, still finding it difficult to organise work in the Near East alone from this distance. I had Hamish my son in 1971. We went as a family on leave to India, where Keith was making films for the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation], and I carried out some interesting ethnographic work on tribal pottery, studying how specific decorative motifs were transmitted through a locality in which the caste of male village potters sold their pots at weekly markets. Unfortunately the project was later irrevocably confused by the University's photographic department.

MC: You were looking at pottery from an ethnographic view?

JB: Yes indeed. I'm always interested in pottery ethnographically—I worked on local Aegean pottery trade circuits while excavating at Zagora in 1963, and of course Kathmandu in the early 70s. In the Munda tribal area of Bihar, the tribal potters were still making village pottery, water containers which they sold to different markets. What I was doing was charting the craft pattern to see how they were translated because the potters worked in very specific ways. The male potters stayed at home and the women married in. You would get a very strong family tradition in one village and you had a really excellent solid tradition of people passing down their ideas of how these designs should be done. It was a fascinating study—as well as the variations resulting from ageing or very young potters, or those with poor eyesight. I had Hamish with me when he was 1 or 2 or 3; they adored this little gold-blond child in the market places. I mapped all the villages and all the potting families—it would have been quite informative.

TI: Judy, can you describe for us the spirit of the 1960s and 1970s as historical archaeology emerged in Australia?

JB: Well, I can try, although it may be difficult to convey quite the sense of intellectual excitement and bubbling energy in all Australian archaeology in the 1960s. First there were the key players, many of them newcomers to Australia from Cambridge with careers to make, and in the first instance all in the field of prehistory whether World, European or Australian—Richard Wright, Vincent Megaw and soon Rhys Jones and Peter White at Sydney University, working with Bill Geddes in Anthropology, Jack Golson and John Mulvaney at the newly-founded ANU, Peter Ucko at the Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now IATSI) in Canberra.

In fact the longer-established Australian prehistorians, like Tindale, I think Mountford and certainly the revered Fred McCarthy, joined the newcomers, and together got the Aboriginal archaeological sites and relics protected with excellent legislation—a significant outcome of the groundbreaking 'Stone Tools as Cultural Markers' conference in Canberra in 1974.

To some extent new fieldwork opportunities on prehistoric sites filled a partial gap for a few students in the new Department of Archaeology, interested in Old World pottery and urban sites. Before the new Department, numbers had been small enough to work in Cyprus with Professor Stewart, and I think Robert Merrillees and Graham Pretty. Basil Hennessey, an excellent excavator in Cyprus and Palestine, as it was then, also taught in Archaeology at that time.

But Stewart's excavating days were over, and this left growing numbers of Archaeology students wanting to dig, as well as read about it. Australian ghost towns had earlier been considered by Hennessey as offering practical fieldwork opportunities, but were categorically ruled out by Stewart, as

in effect they were to be ruled out by Cambitoglou—the Archaeology Department was particularly authoritarian in those days. Conversely, talented students like David Frankel and Jim Allen embodied the sense that archaeology should include Australia, as well as excavation; and it must be remembered the Vietnam spirit of revolt was very much afoot. Could a Department really prevent members of a student Archaeological Society excavating in their vacations? In short, it took the excavation and investigation of historic sites in Australia a year or two longer than prehistoric sites to get underway (and much longer to get legislation) but the later 1960s saw four such projects underway. A student thirst for fieldwork was without question an initial trigger, but at four sites at least the totality of the historical archaeology investigation took immediate control.

TI: So what were these four sites?

JB: I was directly involved with only two of them—Irrawang and Wybalenna. One of the earliest was Jim Allen's thesis research at Port Essington—which began about 1966. Professor John Mulvaney—among the earliest enthusiasts for historical archaeology—was instrumental in getting Jim Allen into doing something at Port Essington in the Northern Territory. Jim Allen was a genuine refugee from Archaeology at Sydney. After a classical archaeology 4th year thesis—I think on Nero's *Domus Aurea*—for which he had little enthusiasm, he went to the new ANU [Australian National University] and set out on his PhD, combining history and archaeology of the intriguing colonial outpost of Port Essington.

Meanwhile from Melbourne University, Bill Culican, another Brit, and a man of great learning who had excavated at the Phoenician site of Motya in the Mediterranean, took his students to work at the Fossil Beach Cement Works [Mornington Peninsula]. This was done in the late 1960s and published in 1972.

Then at Sydney University there was Irrawang, a colonial pottery site in the Hunter Valley which operated from 1830 to 1851. Irrawang started because Archaeology students, desperate for fieldwork experience in 1966 but restricted by departmental rulings, used the University Archaeological Society as a stratagem for organising the excavation. David Frankel was President at that stage. I have a great picture of him on top of a ladder reading the *Thoughts of Chairman David* to the students. We built the dig house at Irrawang—a substantial structure—from the rubble of the old King house which had been earlier knocked over by the Hunter District Water Board, with concrete from the spillway currently being constructed nearby by the Water Board. They were very helpful and enthusiastic at that stage—we sort of diverted a couple of large trucks to pour a bit of concrete over the rubble we had laid out in lines of formwork. It is difficult now to get the sense of the genuine excitement then—how Australian history and Australian archaeology were really pushing the boundaries and making discoveries. People had not done this before and it was new—the idea of applying archaeology to historic sites.

We found the site because Kevin Fahey said to me he had been talking to Stanley Lipscombe, a very well-known antique dealer. He had found the site of James King's pottery up in the Hunter Valley. Stanley Lipscombe had walked over the site and found all these pottery wasters and so on and Kevin said: 'Why not go and have a look at it?' So we did. We went and looked and there it was. Fortunately it was a dry spell. The site suffered enormously either by being totally underwater, which it always was in the May vacation, or baked to a cinder, which it was in the December vacation. The temperature would go

roaring up to 110 degrees. We started off in August 1967, David Frankel, Christine Eslick, Bronwyn Gearing, and Peter Callaghan.

In this first excavation—August and then December 1967—we started on the first kiln, the big kiln A. Annie Bickford was there, David or course, Christine Eslick, Bronwyn Geering and later Maureen Byrne, Meg Smee, Richard Morrison, Danni Petocz, Alex Dane—so many students worked there. Later they went on and did other projects like the Balmain Watchhouse, the well in Rozelle, and Port Arthur. Excavation continued until 1974 and 75 at Irrawang, with generations of students attending—many of whom went on to careers in historical and other archaeologies.

I might mention that dear old Irrawang was unbelievably cheap to run. It was funded by the students—they all contributed a dollar a day and that was it. We camped and we bought food communally and the students cooked it in turn themselves. That was it. We had about 30 students at \$30 a day and we ate royally! The same system more or less operated at Wybalenna on Flinders Island, at Hill End Roasting Pits, Mamre, Elizabeth Farm, to name just a few early field projects—there wasn't really any other source of funds that I remember. I have just been listing the very different costs of our later projects—Regentville, our teaching excavation of 1985 to 1993 was, we thought, generously funded by the National Estate at \$8,000, while the ARC-funded Central Australian Project [Australian Research Council] in the 1990s came to a total of \$90,000—but then it was a very different operation.

As for Wybalenna on Flinders Island this project came about through the National Trust in Sydney, where John Morris—a Tasmanian—was in charge, soon joined by Peter James, another Tasmanian (a great mate of mine over the next 20 years, especially in getting conservation guidelines in place nationally). I was invited to Wybalenna in 1969 on Flinders Island, where local people were robbing the rubble mounds for bricks (in fact in a good cause); Dr Clifford Craig, President of the Tasmanian National Trust was very helpful, and I was able to take four students with me to carry out emergency salvage.

We returned in 1971, with a Summer School at Wybalenna organised by the Tasmania Adult Education Board and a great guy called Gordon Goward. We had about 20 people there, including supervisors Val Attenbrow, David Frankel and Annie Bickford. In the early 70s we had a finds store in the Institute building. I remember coming back to the store early in 1973 and there was a girl sitting on the steps saying 'I am one of your students, Maureen Byrne'. Maureen went on to be a top student; she, and many others, including Adult Education intensive students like Ilma Powell and Lydia Kennedy (Bushall), dedicated hours in the early 1970s to processing the Wybalenna finds.

TI: When did you have time to excavate at Zagora [Andros, Greece]?

JB: I sometimes wonder, but remember that I was not involved in post-excavation work from Zagora. No finds analysis took place here in Sydney; Dick Green and others went over to Andros in non-digging years to work on the pottery. The Zagora dig took place in the northern summer—between June and September, mainly in the August vacation. I went twice, in 1967 and 1969—it was a fascinating site with the potential for interesting research directions in social archaeology, but it wasn't my site.

Irrawang was much more within the direction of myself and the SU Archaeology Society. We must have organised the

Irrawang excavation seasons around the Zagora seasons, although when I was on leave in 1972 there were very competent students available as supervisors to take over from me. In the late 1960s we sometimes had four excavation seasons in a year (a week to ten days each), sometimes two: May and December. Sometimes I went away elsewhere for fieldwork—India, and of course Zagora. The amount that we did was quite stunning. I don't remember ever having a vacation, we did fieldwork all through the vacations. And when I had Hamish in 1971 he came too.

TI: Now it seems to be much more regulated, more red tape and insurance issues?

JB: Yes, it seems immensely more regulated. For a start, I think you can no longer charge students for excursions, and so on. Now that is a big turn off. We were never allowed to charge much, but you need petrol money. We also had students with cars giving lifts to those without—unthinkable today. But at least all enrolled students today are covered by University insurance so they can go on authorised excavations. It has all conspired to make things really difficult. Our culture then—certainly my culture—was to do as much in the way of excursions and hands-on-work, perhaps because I had an early start in adult education in England.

When we started HA in 1974, we made excavation, as well as other fieldwork, an essential part of the course. Finally we took the whole class to an excavation in Central Australia. That was part of the course in 1992. Which I still think was a triumph—I don't know that anyone has done it before. Otherwise it was a week at Elizabeth Farm, Regentville, Mamre or whatever we were working on at the time.

We usually did the Hawkesbury recording and surveying excursion at Easter, then in May we went up to Hill End, Lithgow, Carcoar, and those sort of places to survey industrial sites. In August we often did the Hunter Valley recording excursion, and then in December—as relaxation—we did Irrawang or another excavation, such as the early stages of Regentville.

I felt strongly that fieldwork should be obligatory within the course, and it had to be for pass students. I was fed up with the elitism associated with Honours student (not of course their fault!), with pass students left behind as second-class citizens. I felt that prehistory did encourage this concept, at least early on. Mind you, prehistoric sites are different. On Roman sites you can have a hundred people on site and you would not even see them!

TI: Going on that fieldwork, when I was a student, had an enormous impact on me. I had come down to Uni straight from school and the places that you and Ian Jack took me to see, I could hardly believe they were in Australia! It was like a different world for me—a vision of the eighteenth century—because of the countryside and the houses and the architecture of the Hawkesbury, and everywhere else we went.

JB: Yes, wasn't it incredible? Remember Ravenswood, wasn't that a wonderful house? And there was quite a good community interaction in those areas. That was another part of it actually. I was, again, incensed at the fact that so often, as with the National Trust, we all had the fun of going to places that actually were real and new and undiscovered. The poor old public paid their money and they went to places that had all been tarted up and I thought that it was not fair. We have this term for it—the 'Voyage of Rediscovery'—that one

needed to go to these places so as to do the finding out process yourself. My view was—and is—that everybody should be able to find something and discover and work through the discovery process. But of course it's coming to an end and the resource is diminishing. I am so thrilled people had that opportunity. I would love it to go on.

TI: You spoke about being refugees from archaeology. When I did my PhD I did interviews with students involved in historical archaeology in the 1970s and I did get a sense of that excitement and how they all personally felt they were making a contribution to the community and doing something that really needed to be done.

JB: Yes, so much of it really needed to be done. I think you are right. I am not saying they did not enjoy classical archaeology. I am sure they did, but many of them wanted more, and not to be deprived as it were of the dirt. It all boiled up in 1973 which was when we decided we would try to introduce the historical archaeology course. Cambitoglou would not have it in the Archaeology Department so we had to introduce it as a Faculty of Arts course—the first Faculty of Arts Inter-disciplinary Course, more came later—and that's what happened. And of course we were very fortunate in having Ian Jack as Dean of Arts: he knew the by-laws inside out, and was able to facilitate getting approval through the Faculty. And it did get through.

MC: Why was it seen as inappropriate for the Archaeology Department?

JB: Well I am honestly not sure, coming as I did from the great fieldwork traditions of the London Institute. Jim Stewart had specifically forbidden Basil Hennessy to have anything to do with the local archaeology. Basil Hennessy had the idea of training students to excavate—a pretty unexceptional concept these days. Basil had wanted to go to a goldmining site, say an abandoned gold town, to do some excavation. Perfectly reasonable. But Stewart said: no, it would waste everyone's time. He probably thought it would direct interest away from his Chair which was specifically in Near Eastern Archaeology. So it was possible that Cambitoglou was following that line.

TI: Judy you were obviously developing an interest in landscape and industry in this period—were you influenced by the work of historians such as Linge and Blainey?

JB: I would see them as quite separate lines but I can tell you exactly why we went into the industrial area. It is because that one of the other features of the 1960s was that there were huge technological changes going on in Sydney and everywhere old factories were being demolished. The National Trust, with John Morris and Peter James, were very concerned about this and so was I. I remember John Morris who said to me, hardly knowing me, that they were just demolishing the Chullora pottery works, 'why don't you go down there?' I went down and did record some of the machinery and works. It was at that time, and probably the key point here is, that in 1967 I joined the National Trust Industrial Archaeology Committee, which John Morris had just started. It included Sybil Jack, Philip Simpson, and Emery Balint, who did the work on the warehousing, Wal Whittaker, railway buffs and all sorts of people.

I was the one mainly interested in pottery and brick works and it was at that time that I started working with Heineman

publishers—they wanted something on industrial archaeology. That was quite simply that. It started out with seeing these fantastic places being destroyed without record. We started to make a record before they went under. I worked with Meredith Walker and we did work in the Hunter Valley where we looked at quite a few factories there.

Coming back to historians though—we collected around us a few like-minded historians in Sydney. The people we worked with were mainly at Sydney University, apart from anyone who just blew in from Melbourne. They were Ken Cable, although I do not know quite why he was interested in the archaeological side, but he was and he devoted a lot of time; obviously Ian Jack, Dennis Jeans on the economic geography side, and people from soil science, but a few other historians blew in from time to time, the team changed a bit. Mike Pearson came in once or twice. There were different people who had different interests but there wasn't a strong theoretical or any ideological basis there at all, it was driven by the monuments and their destruction. It really began for us with Irrawang, this concept of adaptive technology and you couldn't but go to Irrawang and see this place laid out exactly like an English pottery works and the repertoire exactly like an English contemporary pottery—but the fact was he had to adapt, he had to make bricks out of the new clay, he had all new fuel resources, and yet he had done this fantastic job—starting a new pottery in new conditions. That was why we moved into the idea that one way to look at this stuff was that he had come out to the colony and was adapting what he knew.

Meanwhile, we had struck up quite an association with Bob Schuyler on the other side of the Atlantic, because the American Society of Historical Archaeology also began in 1967 and they started up what was called the Historic Sites Conference and he was very much a part of that. Then they started *Historical Archaeology*, and we were in very close touch—Bob, of course, came out here, then Mary Beaudry. We remained in close touch, and Bob dedicated his royalties from his book to ASHA. We used his book as a basic text.

TI: What about links with Britain?

JB: Now that is very interesting. Things in Britain don't really become significant for us for another ten or 20 years because the British were still of the view that post-Roman archaeology stopped about the seventeenth century. And there was no interest in Victorian archaeology until almost the 1990s. It took ages. They had the *Post-Medieval Archaeology* journal which occasionally had things in it. I remember going through looking for parallels for the James King kilns but I mean they were all fifteenth century and things like that. Not really very helpful.

1974 TO THE 1988 BICENTENNIAL

TI: You introduced historical archaeology as a course in 1974 in a rather unorthodox way? How did it work out?

JB: In my view it was quite remarkably successful—but then I would, wouldn't I? There are, though, good external criteria for judging success. It always had a solid intake—average about 25—in terms of numbers, but especially impressive in terms of student quality. A very high percentage were Honours students from other fields of archaeology.

Then in response to demand its course teaching steadily expanded. Beginning in 1974 as a single year (taken as either Arts II or Arts III) it expanded in 1980 to provide HAI and

HAI, in 1986 to provide the MA Preliminary, from 1989 HA II, III and IV, and from 1991 the addition of the MA in Public Archaeology, and the MLitt. The first PhDs graduated in the mid-1980s and soon grew in number: I can think of at least Baird, Holmes, Varman, Karskens, Higginbotham, Stuart, and Paterson.

Another measure of course would be the high proportion of our students who moved into professional employment—here or overseas, in consultancy, heritage management or academia. I can't do precise numbers—they are available—but it was spectacularly high.

Finally I could say we did get good feedback from our students—obviously about the fieldwork, they loved it. I would say about 99.5 percent—I do remember one lost soul way back at Irrawang who sent himself a telegram ordering a return home...less predictably perhaps was the enthusiastic response to our second and third year seminar teaching with pre-circulated readings in the later 1980s and 1990s. I note with interest that our best students from those years remain in high demand as top-quality field archaeologists here and overseas—but then most of them at that time had a very broad base of archaeological education. Much of the credit here is due to Andrew Wilson's rich talent for teaching, for data management, for GIS mapping, and for organising expeditions.

TI: So when the faculty finally agreed to the historical archaeology course, what did they give you in the way of facilities and resources?

JB: Central administration support for enrolments etc. Then 'no additional resources'. No staff member today would be stupid or naive enough to undertake even a single new course with that condition. I did, and sought financial and other support outside the University—from the Whitlam Government's Heritage Commission, the newly formed national NGO ICOMOS, the various National Trusts, and very soon the NSW State Government's new environmental structures.

Within the University of Sydney there were no funds, but immense support from staff members like Ian Jack, Ken Cable, Dennis Jeans and from Soil Science, and also from UNSW from Bob Irving, Peter Reynolds, Don Godden and so on. Then there was the newly formed ASHA which increased our public profile. Of course in the 1970s heritage, conservation and Australian archaeology were a rising tide partly because of the tidal wave of redevelopment sweeping Sydney and elsewhere...

MC: But was this enough support to keep you going?

JB: It probably was, except that we—the Inter-disciplinary HA team—were able to tap into a further source of actual funds. In terms of human resources a yearly grant from the Heritage Commission paid for a half-time tutor—an essential. Very lucky in our tutors—Barbara Little, Carol Liston, Robert Varman, Tim Murray and then of course Andrew Wilson, a hugely talented team player.

From about 1977 I was able to apply for consultancies, at first for Commonwealth and then State projects assessment, the payments for which went first to qualified students to do work under supervision, with any surplus feeding into the HA funds.

MC: What did you see as the essential content of the new Historical Archaeology course, beyond the various forms of fieldwork?

JB: We had plenty of time in the 1960s to think through the combination of skills we wanted to teach—certainly site understanding, plus techniques to survey, record and analyse site processes, but also the historical, environmental and theoretical contexts for such work in practical form, not just lectures. We were determined to include some archaeological science—a strong unit of soils practical work and theory, taught by the Soil Science Department. A Soil Science team came with us on all fieldwork to do remote sensing, and take samples with our students which were later analysed by them back in Sydney. Similarly, along with overview summaries of issues in Australian histories, all students researched land title chains first hand, while group tutorials on foot analysed the developmental sequence of the University Quadrangle, Redfern streetscapes, or in due course the archaeology of Hyde Park Barracks.

We felt the best teaching was by doing. Later on when we had second and third year units, we did both in seminar-type classes, with group discussion of circulated readings led by a prepared student. Each class was based on a specific theoretical issue with case studies selected (and pre-circulated) for discussion. Andrew Wilson and I often jointly led them—I think we got as much out of them as the students.

Also the major project: a mini historical archaeological investigation involving a combination of research techniques to investigate. This was basically free choice but we soon learned the need for unobtrusive direction into projects we could predict were a useful exercise—usually not grandma's cottage first up. This experience was useful later for Honours theses: allowing students to launch into unknown research areas, however exciting, had to be matched by real commitment from the supervisor.

MC: You have stressed the importance of fieldwork opportunities for students Judy, how would you sum up what skills were learned?

JB: Well, first would be the total site studies I've just described, which they had to draw up and annotate—and often do library research for site histories. Sometimes they added oral histories of workers and personnel, but oral history is very time-consuming.

Secondly, exposure to techniques in survey and planning, and to excavation, usually for a week or ten days. I think we always had an excavation we were running—the most successful as a teaching excavation of course being Regentville. There were notes to keep and later soils and finds to analyse.

Sometimes we added a third component—historic landscape surveys by car, using maps and observation to find historic structures and features. I remember the Camden area was very rewarding.

TI: So how did theory fit into all this for you?

JB: Interesting point—long, long ago, I graduated in the UK Wheeler-Kenyon-Childe tradition of those years, so soon to be confronted by Binford's New Archaeology of the mid-1960s, with Braidwood and Robert Adams re-working the Near East—I must say teaching Near Eastern archaeological theory and method in those years was really stimulating. In fact the Binford school, and especially Deetz, all worked with historical communities, whether white, indigenous or other ethnic American. The US Society for Historical Archaeology was founded in 1967, and our ASHA was closely associated with them from the start.

We had to do our own exploration of the Australian history-archaeology relationship—Australian history was solidly established in academia. In fact debate happened later—we knew too little of what evidence Australian sites might offer. Our research sites, Irrawang, Regentville and Central Australia, were and are archaeology-rich, with a sometimes sparse text-based context—later oral sources as well—to be drawn upon as needed.

In theoretical terms I'd define three stages at Sydney. Early emphasis was on how immigrants, whether voluntary or not, adapted traditional UK social and technological systems to the new colony. This was when sites being investigated were primarily early nineteenth century in NSW, Tasmania (or the colonial Port Essington). The major excavation for some years was, as we have mentioned, at Irrawang, a colonial pottery run by a talented rival of Josiah Wedgwood. The adaptation theme became known as the Swiss Family Robinson model and remains valid and useful, if lacking these days in sophistication.

In the 1980s came the first city excavation with massive deposits of rubble and finds. Only sometimes with classic underfloor deposits. Better from our point of view were the back-filled wells full of British export tablewares—paralleled in a country seat by Jamison's incredible hoard in the privy at Regentville. Obviously a bigger thematic canvas was needed—our new answer was *Archaeology in the World Context*, ASHA's Bicentennial volume of 1988. I did more globe-trotting then, to various parts of the former Empire to check out these British exports and of course there they all were, our nineteenth-century UK export dinner sets, from Fiji to Sri Lanka, along with similar brickworks in India, and aged steam-plant on Fiji's sugar plantations. We applied for funds in 1992 to follow up on the World Context theme but weren't successful. Providentially, probably, because others very ably did.

At Sydney University we made a considered move from archaeologies of consumerism in the post-processual, multi-voice 1990s—to an archaeology of meaning in quite a different direction. One such initiative had already been the *Digging for Meaning* Exhibition in the Macleay Museum in 1989. Then we turned to explore meaning in Central Australia, where the impact of European expansion into Central Australia, following the Overland Telegraph Line, is evidenced by surface archaeology. We had four seasons of mapping and quantifying deposits on remote surface sites, and one of excavation. I would have to say that for me the analysis of this work embodies the most complex, the most confronting and the most absorbing archaeology yet—perhaps because at last I have the time to follow its findings wherever they lead...

TI: Is it possible that one objection to the introduction of the original historical archaeology course was its lack of a theory base—that in some way it was not quite respectable?

JB: I wish... You could not say there was a strong component of theory in the Department of Archaeology's courses in the early years. In line with most Old World archaeology courses globally they were and remained culture history—culture sequences of long-lived sites based on recognition of pottery and other artefact forms (which students had to know!). I hope my second-year Honours course was a bit more interesting—it expanded in the late 1960s to include Braidwood, Adams, Schuyler, and the Binford school of New Archaeologists—especially the great Jim Deetz—but the basic structure of the Near Eastern courses was not intellectually exciting. Classical archaeology remained committed to scholarship in classical vase painting and sculpture.

On looking again at your question then I would say no to the first part, but probably yes to the second. Why did HA lack academic respectability in the early years? I actually think the problem was not in the new field, rather in how the University wanted the new Department to complement the Edwin Cuthbert Hall Chair and Nicholson Museum—department and museum were very close then. Possibly the eminent A.D. Trendall was involved, a great supporter of the Nicholson. Interestingly Sir Charles Nicholson was involved in some of the early explorations of Australia and its ethnographic collections—I don't know that he would have minded too much. I have to say it is good to see the expansion of Nicholson displays to include historic Irrawang during 2007.

TI: It is interesting that from about 1966 you increasingly became involved in activities outside the strictly academic...

JB: This is a very large subject, and critical to historical archaeology beginnings—I doubt I can do it justice here. It began for me with the National Trust and the Industrial Archaeology Committee about 1966, but really we are talking a huge public ground-swell for action about the destruction of Australia's historic buildings, led by the new Whitlam Government.

First came the inventory of the National Estate, as it came to be known, and then to put in place national and state legislation to protect valuable heritage, and then the *Burra Charter* guidelines as to how heritage should be done. Frankly in my view this could well have gone ahead without the input of archaeologists if just a few of us had not been pretty vocal—David Yencken was very supportive at the top, as of course was Jim Kerr in the new Australian Heritage Commission. We were the energetic supporting cast—Peter James, Miles Lewis, Meredith Walker, as just a few. The very early HA excavations were proof that archaeological input was essential.

Problems were these meetings were often in Canberra, and, once ICOMOS got moving, all over the country. There was a lot of drafting as well as many site visits. With my heavy teaching schedule (which was after all self-inflicted, and which I thought part of my duties anyway) plus all these meetings, conferences and public commitments, time sort of ran out. What suffered was research and publication, which often got set aside for when all the new protective infrastructure was in place. I am not sure how the University in those more traditional days viewed all these activities, but it did give the University a public presence.

All this activism occupied the early and mid-1970s. Then the big conservation projects began to flow—starting I think with Port Arthur. The early shortage of qualified graduates to do urgent conservation assessments, as well as the continuing need to self-fund HA, meant we in HA increasingly—through our very talented students—took on supervision of paid consultancies.

TI: You emphasise job opportunities for graduates in HA as one sign of success. Did this happen by accident?

JB: Answer as above—we were setting up the legislative and NGO structures while at the same time training students who could undertake the work when it was needed. You have to understand that not even architects at that time were particularly geared to the physical analysis of historic fabric, just as classical and prehistoric-trained archaeologists were in no way equipped to analyse archaeological potential on a nineteenth-century goldfield or convict site...

TI: Who was commissioning these early jobs—there wasn't much heritage legislation in place at that time?

JB: You are right. The main emphasis at that time was on continuing the assessment of the National Estate, and the new Commonwealth heritage legislation required all Commonwealth Government departments to complete heritage surveys of their assets. This particularly included many of the hugely historic defence establishments throughout the country, often with structures back to convict times, and many historic prison buildings and gaols. Other departments involved were those in charge of lighthouses and post offices, and I think also asylums. However by 1977 and 1978 the NSW government had its own legislation in place so that State government departments got their own heritage assessments underway. In the 1990s we were involved in writing guidelines for local councils and the general public for how to assess historical archaeology sites for conservation management.

At that stage the urgency was to inventory what actually existed, prior to any conservation work being undertaken, and as a result those working on these projects got a lot of practice in historical research and the analysis of visible ruins and structures. Certainly there were no excavations then. One problem perhaps for archaeological training was that archaeological research excavations were very much on hold for perhaps a decade. Excavation began again in Sydney from about 1980 with salvage excavations at Old Sydney Gaol, Hyde Park Barracks (1981) and First Government House (1983)—all suffered, exciting as they certainly were, from the constraints of such projects.

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING 1974–1990

Early 1970s

JB: I'd add that all these elements continued with vigour during the steady expansion of HA courses from 1974–1990—but that we just got better at doing them. The early 70s were still a bit of a heroic age for HA—for an early lecture in April 1974 I took the whole class down to Town Hall for emergency salvage archaeology—the contractors excavating for what is now Sydney Square had uncovered the first of the eighteenth-century burial vaults from the Old Burial Ground. We managed to get a short stay—and recorded the vault and three more burials, as well as the 1.7m soil profile and samples.

After the heritage legislation of the mid 1970s, our Irrawang-trained students did more extended work from 1977 to 1982: Maureen Byrne at Port Arthur, Damaris Bairstow in the city, Martin Davies and Graham Wilson at Fort Scratchley, the Macquarie Lighthouse and Norfolk Island.

1980s

JB: We increasingly managed to integrate site visits and exercises into what I, at least, thought were sound, as well as exciting learning experiences. Our field excursions covered three localities: the Hawkesbury–Nepean, Lithgow–Hill End and the Hunter Valley. The Hawkesbury–Nepean–Camden area in May included excavations at Mamre, Elizabeth Farm House and then of course Regentville, which took over from Lithgow, Hill End and Lucknow during the mid 1980s for site observation, survey and recording. Some marvellous memories—Martin and his year camping in the ghost-ridden Mamre; Barry, Warren and others recording Parkers Slaughter House at Castlereagh; icy camping at the Hill End Roasting Pits (Helen Temple, Richard Morrison)... I'd better not start

on individual students—but what a marvellous lot they always have been...

What we saw was a basic need for interdisciplinary content—experience in drawing together a wide range of relevant sources and techniques within an archaeology-based matrix. In those days there was much use of the terms *emic* and *etic*, and it was our view that archaeological *etic* data could complement the rich *emic* sources of written Australian history.

TI: You seem to have spent a lot of time on industrial sites like goldmines—was that a special interest before you came here?

JB: Not really, except in so far as pottery was always my thing, so to speak, and pottery production is an industrial process. Hence the attraction of Irrawang. But from there the study of older industrial sites became very much a part of the adapted technology theme. Finding Cornish mining methods and plant here was the first surprise—then other nineteenth-century steam and winding machinery, all fast disappearing elsewhere in the world. By 1967 I was involved with the NT IAC [National Trust Industrial Archaeology Committee] and the Institution of Engineers, then ICOMOS, in trying to prevent all of it going for scrap. More important perhaps was my preference for non-elites—I was never heavily involved in the historic homes of the landed gentry. Then Heinemann got interested in publishing a book, and with Dennis Jeans and Ian Jack it all went on from there.

Of particular interest was the fact that remote and abandoned industrial sites like gold and copper mines, also brick and pottery works, are ideal for total site fieldwork. Students can find for themselves the key features of these sites, work out flow charts, plan transport systems and materials storage, and look for traces of workers' dwellings. Often they worked out the phases of site development. We took our students to plan numerous sites in Lithgow, Hill End, Lucknow, Sunny Corner, Cessnock, the Castlereagh Slaughterhouse, Goulburn railway workshops—and many more. The key attraction, of course, was they knew the site once functioned as a whole—their task was to unravel just how it worked, including at different times during the lifespan of the site.

TI: Judy, it's been a fascinating journey from the cultural cringe of the 1960s to the vibrant scene of today—you've achieved so much, do you feel the University has recognised this?

JB: Look, probably not—but I don't think self-promotion has ever been my style. I am sure others would have done things differently and far more strategically—built a career, perhaps an empire out of a whole new discipline with global connections. I always published locally to support ASHA, not internationally, and spent too much time giving students here fieldwork experience, and developing the discipline at grass roots, not enough stacking up publications and courting the right people. Should have been more of a tactician in my own interests, I suppose. But Tracy, I'm not complaining; any contribution I've made over the years to historical archaeology in Australia has been its own incredible satisfaction.

1990s

TI: You have described the 1990s as a time of consolidation in the teaching of historical archaeology and a period in which you moved in some exciting new directions.

JB: In terms of consolidation I'd see at least five areas—apart from the personal one of my promotion with the publication of the *Wybalenna* (1990) volume.

Probably the most significant was steadily firming our basic approach especially to urban investigations by our students, starting way back with our Old Sydney Burial Ground experience. I've mentioned how during the 1980s our emphasis had moved into urban archaeology, and how we worked towards defining typical city contexts like back-filled wells and underfloor deposits, setting artefacts within consumerist frameworks and above all continuing to emphasise archaeological meaning in artefacts. I would cite again the two products that sum up our directions by 1990: the 1988 ASHA publication *Archaeology in the World Context* and the 1989 Macleay Museum exhibition, *Digging for Meaning*. I feel we really consolidated the work of nearly two decades as we continued to follow through with these themes of course in the teaching of the 1990s. In the early 1990s, following the *World Context* Conference, I went on to Fiji, Jamaica, Sri Lanka looking at the archaeology of the British Empire within the broader World Systems Theory.

Another consolidation was administrative—changes at Sydney University marked the new decade, and HA, ceasing to be an independent inter-departmental entity, was absorbed into a new department known as Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology. This meant some loss of control, but a marked decrease in administration and workload. HA continued its highly successful teaching methodology in later years, with readings on themes in seminar groups which seemed to work so well. Here I would underline again the significance of the Regentville excavation—a meticulous training exercise and one that had a big impact.

The fact is too that Historical Archaeology by this time was also far more widely taught in Australia (both terrestrial and maritime), available at La Trobe, Flinders, Charles Darwin, James Cook, and Western Australia. Lists of Honours theses are available on University web-sites, graduates from these institutions were more than equipped for employment and research, and national conferences were increasingly rewarding. Also the expansion of ASHA to include New Zealand has greatly strengthened the field, sharing experience in areas like goldfield technology and whaling sites. Employment opportunities for graduates in conservation management and consultancies continued to increase.

As for the new directions, I would start with at least two enormously stimulating conferences both with long-term impacts—the *Archaeology in the 1990s* Conference at University of New England (with my old colleague Lew Binford), and the 1991 first *Women in Archaeology* Conference at Albury with other distinguished visitors: Meg Conkey, Joan Gero, and Alison Wylie. The move to synchronize the various archaeological societies' annual conferences into a single location is another welcome move.

And of course I would have to go on to our Central Australia research project beginning in 1992. We moved beyond NSW and the archaeology of convicts and early settlement into Central Australia and the then quite new archaeology of European encounter, contact and pastoralism. Well, perhaps not totally new—my interest in this field had never flagged since *Wybalenna*.

TI: Why do you see the archaeology of encounter and contact as particularly challenging and interesting?

JB: Well, I have said I never cared to concentrate on the archaeology of the dominant and the invader and I don't. Also it seemed a critical direction for our new discipline to explore

and hopefully in which to make significant contributions. For example, in looking at encounter and contact archaeology has to offer major possibilities—in giving a voice to the usually voiceless in colonial history, for example, as well as potentially informing on the interaction of such viewpoints. Another area for study is the environmental context for these continuing episodes.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

TI: So what are some of the key issues for historical archaeology today in your view Judy?

JB: There is one issue I sometimes wonder about—that of contracting standards and peer group review. Most professional bodies have some sort of system in place for monitoring practice and quality control. It's pretty standard for professionals involved to review themselves before any problems actually arise, rather than after.

However, to matters of more substance. Probably the major issue today is the difficulty consultants have in getting results out to the public—its beginning to stifle overall development of the field. One way round this might be to grasp the nettle and accept that salvage or CRM digs with site boundaries defined by the redevelopment are critically different to research projects, where the researcher defines the site according to pre-set research questions.

My suggestion would then be to simplify requirements for non-research excavations by using a standard set of macro questions as a minimum, as well as devising extra ones for individual sites if needed. This macro set could be used to collate basic urban information through time that really only begins to make sense across several sites, such as, information about transport, street surfaces, depth of street rubbish, water supply and drainage services, latrines and sewerage, vermin and pets, room size, access and fenestration, building materials—wall, ceiling, foundations; lighting, heating and power; as well as more human topics like women's activities, children, convicts and so on. The macro questions would be a bit like folders—they would come with the permit, ensuring wider collection of data at a level that was useful for inter-site analysis, and provide a simple entry for researchers into the site report and database with more specific details. I'm thinking of Honours students for example—we do need this sort of collation done, and they need experience in researching urban sites. Consultants cannot always justify being paid to write up bits of drainage pipe or disinfectant bottles on a single site.

Another issue for me (perhaps a personal hobby horse) is what I might call the integrity of the archaeological record—the separation of archaeological evidence and the archaeological record from any premature blending with other forms of data—particularly historical textual sources. Of course, there will be additional categories of evidence, really valuable, but only if kept firmly separate at first, then later used forensically to support or question each other. Presentation of results is best a dialectic very different to the current fad for 'the story'—a single narrative in which cross-disciplinary outcomes are seamlessly blended.

As I see it the 'single narrative' in which the multiple strands of interpretation are resolved into a single narrative is usually an over simplification, an unacceptable kind of dumbing down. More significant, it gets very close to a core question in archaeology which is after all basically about things and specifically the meanings of things. The archaeological record, which is wordless, can only provide

evidence of past actions with a range of possible meanings, rarely certainties. We find pins under the floorboards, Egyptian memento on the chimney piece, one cracked porcelain saucer near the kitchen sink. Various explanations arise for each, some more likely on further investigation, none—on archaeological evidence alone—certainties. Archaeologists have other ways through these choices—the usual one is by the application of appropriate theory, but still no single-strand certainties.

The public needs to be welcomed into these puzzles, not actually barred from them by a single-strand-history fence. UK television demonstrates the magnetism of archaeological puzzles—there is no problem these days in getting access to the media for public instruction—they are fast running out of content.