

That Was Then,
This Is Now

That Was Then, This Is Now:

Contemporary Archaeology and Material Cultures in Australia

Edited by

Ursula K. Frederick and Anne Clarke

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AD	Anno Domini
ANU	Australian National University
BBQ	barbecue/barbeque
BCE	Before the Common/Current/Christian Era
CE	Common/Current/Christian Era
ETFE	Ethylene tetrafluoroethylene
IAEA	<i>International Atomic Energy Agency</i>
INES	International Nuclear and Radiological Events Scale
JSA	Justice Society of America
mSv	milliSievert
NASA	<i>National Aeronautics and Space Administration</i>
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NPAACT	National Parks Association of the ACT
NRMA	National Roads and Motorists Association
NSW	New South Wales
ORAU	Oak Ridge Associated Universities
RNA	Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales
SATAN	Satellite Automatic Tracking Antenna Network
SETI	Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence
STADAN	Satellite Tracking and Data Acquisition Network
UK	United Kingdom
US/USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW: AN INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHAEOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

ANNE CLARKE AND URSULA K. FREDERICK

Introduction

Contemporary archaeologies should be global (Graves-Brown et al. 2013), but in truth much of the scholarship in the field is an archaeology in and of the present Northern hemisphere. For an Antipodean audience, and many archaeology practitioners located outside the Euro-American hegemony, existing scholarship is always grounded in a distant elsewhere. Yet one of the charms and challenges that contemporary archaeologies offer is a proximity to the familiar. Thus for an archaeology of the recent past to be truly global we need to account for contemporary life as it is experienced in Africa, South America, Asia, and Oceania. This rationale is what first motivated us to host a two-day workshop on contemporary archaeology as practiced in or by Australians. The workshop was held at the University of Sydney and attended by established scholars and students of archaeology as well as artists, designers and historians.¹ That event, and the discussions it raised, seeded the present volume.

While an Australian focus might be in danger of sounding parochial, we felt that the current literature on the subject would benefit from a wider collective of voices. Moreover, all archaeologies are generated under particular spatial and contextual conditions. In many respects, archaeology demands that we ground our research in inherently material subjects—sites, collections, artefacts, etc.—and for the most part these materials are highly localised in context and provenance.

To consider what role Australian archaeology and material culture scholars might play in the burgeoning field of contemporary archaeology research it is useful to give some background to the development of Australian archaeology. Australian archaeology may in some ways be characterised as bi-polar. Most practicing archaeologists operate at one end of a temporal spectrum involving on the one hand questions concerning late quaternary archaeology (“prehistory”) and the broad questions that generates; on the other there is a strong interest in historic archaeologies (e.g. mining, pastoralism, colonialism and civic settlement) produced in the wake of British colonisation. Other strengths include a deep engagement with Indigenous Australians, ethnoarchaeology, rock art studies and community-led research. Archaeologies of the post-war and late modern period have been rarer in Australia, unlike Europe and the United Kingdom.

The workshop generated great enthusiasm and interest amongst those attending, and a prevailing theme arising from our discussions was how we might foster this field and share its exciting opportunities with our Australian colleagues across the broader discipline. In many ways the title of the event, and this book, is intended as an invocation in that direction. We would like to see a re-alignment in the scope of Australian archaeology away from the big questions, grand narratives and dominant paradigms of the past to a discipline more inclusive of the voices, concerns, issues and nuanced archaeologies of the present and recent past.

That Australian archaeology we describe *was* of its time, but it is time, we would argue, to move on and get with the *now*. This is not to suggest that we are denying the value of colonial archaeology or an abiding interest in “deep time”, rather that the spectrum of archaeology in Australia would benefit from better dialogue between our two disembodied halves. Contemporary archaeology, with its particular attunement to the role that our own presence plays in the reading and writing of the past, is a perfect position from which to start.

Time is of course a central focus and determining structure in archaeological practice (Lucas 2005) and both the term and the field of contemporary archaeology, as it is undertaken globally, may be seen as emergent. While we are conscious that the term “contemporary” may be regarded as amorphous and indefinite, we do not wish to labour this point. By employing it here we pay heed to the many scholars who have wrestled to define it (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2010; Graves-Brown et al. 2013). Indeed the very title of this volume lays claim

to the uncertain parameters of the term and, in effect, the sub-discipline. When precisely is the then and at what point does it elide into now? The challenge in defining what may be regarded as the contemporary past or the present is illustrated by a personal encounter with Google maps. When attempting to view the home where I (UF) have lived for more than a year, there is no evidence of my presence. By comparison, I can still see my car parked in the backyard of the house where I lived for over a decade. What makes this snapshot in time all the more strange is that from a different angle (Google Streetview) my car appears on the verge of my former home, a moment in time captured at least 1–2 years earlier. Of course, no search engine and mapping device is without fault, but what is intriguing is the general expectation that the internet (and other social media) are constantly updated to a state of now, and therefore cast an accurate reflection of the present state of the world.

The intriguing case of where I live, as represented by Google, illuminates various threads enfolded in the study of contemporary archaeologies. It points to the centrality of telecommunications, off-world infrastructure and the diverse technologies of mobility that influence life in the early twenty-first century. It clearly demonstrates the complexities of how we perceive time and scale, but it also directs us more specifically to the topics of home and belonging (see Brown, Chapter 2 for further discussion).

Home is a concept that holds enormous currency in the world today. In a time when whole communities are being displaced, people are migrating thousands of kilometres, refugee numbers are growing exponentially, and the human race is travelling into space, the place and placelessness of home and what that means in terms of belonging, is of increasing relevance. This leads us to consider what global material signatures might consist of both temporally and spatially. One of the first things that comes to mind when pressed to imagine such a material signature is the hearth and its manifestations as indoor heating, indoor cooking and outdoor cooking. In Australia a key and iconic artefact in the contemporary archaeology of the home and the hearth is the barbeque (BBQ) in the backyard.

Another “shrimp” on the barbie

In the 1980s the barbeque was presented as symbol of national identity when it featured in the Australian Tourism Commission advertisements starring actor Paul Hogan who promised intending overseas visitors that he would, “...slip an extra shrimp on the barbie for you” (Australian

Tourism Commission 1984). Even though no self-respecting Australian would ever use the term shrimp when referring to a prawn; grilling meat, fish and vegetables outdoors on the BBQ is one of those quintessential Australian activities (Thomson 2000). It is embedded in the design of backyards (Hall 2010; Head and Muir 2006, 513, Figure 2) and is a part of all sorts of public events such as Australia Day, elections, school fêtes and charity fundraisers.

The material culture of cooking outdoors in Australia has transformed over time. Indigenous Australians roasted and steamed meat, fish, shellfish and plant foods such as yams on the hot wood charcoals of a campfire or in an earth oven heated by clay heat retainers. Colonial/settler Australians also used the basic technology of a campfire or hearth to boil water in a billycan or cook in an iron camp oven. A famous Australian painting from 1889 by Frederick McCubbin entitled, *Down on his Luck*, depicts an itinerant swagman sitting by a campfire. His only material possessions are a swag (bedroll) and billycan. Coming forward in time to the present day, the materiality of outdoor cooking has been totally transformed as described in this on-line advertisement for an outdoor kitchen:

The backyard BBQ will always be an integral part of any backyard ... Kastell have taken it to the next level. Kastell Kitchens has been designing kitchens since 1983 and have become market leaders. Outdoor Kitchens have become very popular. Australians are designing them into their homes, to create the ultimate entertaining area. They should have all the essential features, a few large deep drawers, cabinet space for storage needs, refrigeration, sinks and preparation areas. There are many options available to clients. The type of appliances they choose is an example. Teppanyaki or hooded BBQ, Custom made or traditional sink - the list goes on. Add a dishwasher maybe! (Kastell, Outdoor Kitchens, 2014).

Overtime, the practice of outdoor cooking has changed spatially, socially and materially. The changes wrought in the once humble BBQ not only reflects changing socio-cultural attitudes and relationships to the outdoors, to backyards, gender roles, cooking and technology but it also lends itself to archaeological investigation. The changing structures, artefacts and locations of BBQs could all be analysed as archaeological phenomenon. The hypothetical potential of the backyard BBQ as a subject for archaeology is illustrated in the following excerpt from a transcript of a television interview (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2003) between presenter George Negus and Mark Thomson, author of *Meat, Metal & Fire* (Thomson 2000),

MARK THOMSON: Some anthropologist in a few thousand years will excavate an Australian backyard and really wonder, “What was this kind of strange pile of metal attachments used for? What barbaric practices went on here?” It is about, like, hunting and gathering and providing for the clan. You get the fire going and then you put the meat on to cook and the smell is kind of like a big, kind of, hairy-chested thing to the neighbourhood that says, you know...(imitates Tarzan, beating his chest) “I’m a hunter-gatherer, providing for my clan,” sort of thing, you know? And all the neighbours are around going...(sniffs) “Ooh, boy, that smells good, doesn’t it?” We think of ourselves as the great barbeque nation, but barbecuing as a sort of social sort of habit of Australians really only dates to about just after the Second World War. Even though the Greeks and Italians, of course, had been eating outside on their back verandas under the grapevine for many years in Australia, it was something that we, the Anglos, first discovered, really, in the ’50s and ’60s. It was actually first really known as a “chop picnic”—that was the expression people used. You’d put this thing between a couple of rocks or bricks and you’d cook a few chops on it—no salad. During the Depression, of course, the sorts of people who ate outside were people who’d lost their houses. You know, the unemployed people. I had, like, one old bloke saying to me, it was something that drovers, people on the dole and Aborigines did—ate outside. He just thought it was disgusting.

The changes in social and cultural attitudes towards outdoors cooking alluded to by Thomson in this excerpt all have a distinct material signature. The Fredrick McCubbin painting of the itinerant gold prospector down on his luck contains only a couple of portable items. Despite the ephemerality and mobility of the material elements represented in this image, many historical nineteenth-century bush camps still retain the remnants of objects such as metal buckles from straps that might have fastened a swag, billycan handles and pieces of cast iron camp ovens as well as more permanent cooking features such as stone hearths and ovens (Feakins 2013, 134–140).

As Thomson states above, the so-called chop picnics of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, were seen as distinctly Australian:

Singer Evie Hayes said in America recently that she was thrilled at the prospect of returning to Australia, because it was ‘the only place in the world where you can have chop picnics’. (Burra Record 1952, 1).

In a photograph titled “Sausages and Chops—The Humpy”, featuring a group of women enjoying a chop picnic in the Blue Mountains in the 1930s, (Blue Mountains Library 1930) the image shows the ephemeral and mobile material traces of outdoor cooking with a billycan, frying pan and

kettle all visible on the campfire. A scene such as this would be almost impossible to find in a bush setting today. Legislation, public policy and technology have increasingly intervened in the make-do and spontaneous nature of chop picnics and backyard barbeques. Despite these restrictions, the shared sociality of the BBQ in public and private spaces alike remains its primary attraction. Along with the well-rehearsed rituals of cooking on the BBQ, there is an associated and highly recognisable suite of material culture—long metal tongs and large metal spatulas for turning the meat and vegetables, paper or plastic plates, plastic cups and glasses, paper napkins, stubbies (bottles) of beer, sauce bottles and spray cans of insect repellent.

Today, stringent bush fire regulations prevent the creation of camp fires in public outdoor areas. Legislation relating to the lighting of fires no longer allows such activities to be carried out in private backyards either, restricting outdoor cooking to gas-fired barbeques and kettle barbeques with heat beads. Although open wood fires are permitted at times of low fire danger in most State and Federal National Parks, where these can be made is highly regulated and contained within permanent fixtures in picnic areas and official camp sites. Local Councils around Australia also provide coin-operated or free gas-fired barbeques in specially built facilities in public parks and reserves (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 Public BBQ facilities, Tooleybuc, NSW. Image: Ursula K. Frederick, 2015.

On a webpage devoted to the Council barbeques of Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, Black (2011) provides the following description of a typical public facility:

Alexandra Headland, southern side

Charm 1: Ocean views. The BBQ is a two-hotplate bench on a concrete deck near the headland's sea-cliff. It looks out to the Pacific horizon, and southwards, gives panoramic views of Mooloolaba Bay's shipping and beach, across to the Mooloolah River mouth and Point Cartwright headland. Charm 2: Protection. The BBQ is under an unwallled tin-roofed shelter, so there's shade. It's cool, too, in the generally present sea breeze, but which sometimes can be strong. Charm 3: Facilities: Fixed metal tables and benches are close by to the BBQ. One is covered, two are not. Taps and bins are handy, as are toilets and parking. Charm 4: Surrounds. There are grassy slopes nearby, and pathways to the beach below. Of course, only one BBQ stand means users may need to wait for a turn at the hotplates.

The invention and development of portable BBQ technology appears to date to the 1930s in America where Louis McGlaughlin invented a portable gas BBQ. He launched the LazyMan at the 1937 World's Fair in New York (LazyMan 2014). The name LazyMan not only evokes the modernist project of harnessing science and technology to free up leisure time by making domestic chores easier but also foreshadows the gender divisions associated with cooking on the barbeque and the outside kitchen as the domain of the "bloke". In 1952 the iconic portable Weber kettle BBQ was invented by George Stephens a metal worker at the Weber factory (Weber 2014). Portable barbeques like the Weber have replaced the campfire as the primary method for outdoor cooking in today's fire conscious environment.

In suburban backyards around Australia the BBQ is an almost ubiquitous feature. In his analysis of the disappearing backyard Tony Hall (2010, 17, Table 1.3) notes that in two Sydney suburbs, Caringbah and Jannali, 77% and 90% respectively of backyards contained a BBQ. Similarly Lesley Head and Pat Muir in their study of backyards reported that 66% contained a BBQ (in Hall 2010, Table 1.5, 19). While these statistics underscore the presence of the BBQ as a feature of the backyard they do not draw out the changing spatialities and materialities of the barbeque.



Figure 1.2 Canberra BBQ. Image: Ursula K. Frederick, 2012.

The BBQ in Figure 1.2 comes from a house in Canberra, the capital of Australia. The house, built in the 1960s by the Federal Government for public servants, is of the type affectionately and colloquially called an “ex-guvvie”, had a home-made barbeque in the backyard. As you would find in most backyards of that era it was located towards the back and to the side of the lawn (see also Head and Muir 2006, Figure 2, 513). It was built of breeze blocks that enclosed a fireplace for wood with a built-in grill for the meat. Variations on this simple design can be found in suburban backyards all over Australia. People would often use spare or scavenged materials such as bricks or cheap concrete blocks to make a BBQ. An example from a historical archaeological site is shown in Figure 1.3. It is located at an ephemeral bush camp located in Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. The structure is built from local stone, is square in shape and there are still piles of charcoal in the fireplace. The site is most likely a stock camp that dates to sometime in the first half of the twentieth century (Feakins 2013, 106–125) and although the grill or cooking plate is no longer *in situ*, fragments of thick iron plate were found on the ground surface nearby.



Figure 1.3 Stone Fireplace at Black Jungle Springs, Kakadu National Park. Image: Anne Clarke, 2013.

BBQs have moved spatially in backyards from the situation described above. Hall (2010) notes that since the 1990s the backyard has begun to disappear with smaller blocks and houses built right to the edges of the block. This reduction in open space has facilitated the uptake of the portable BBQ which can be placed close to the house in the courtyard, patio space or on the back deck without creating a fire hazard. Huge outdoor kitchens that “bring the outside in” (Head and Muir 2006, 512) are a recent “must have” addition to many houses. These hyper-contemporary spaces reference the design of nineteenth-century country house estates where the kitchen area was often located in a small building at the back of the house to reduce the possibility of fire.

This brief case study gives us some insight into what an Australian perspective on the archaeology of the contemporary present might look like. Localised and site-situated studies such as the role of the BBQ in Australian society contribute to our understanding of eating practices, domestication and settlement and notions of belonging that have resonance with human communities around the globe. This leads us to the individual chapters and how, while the local can inform us in important ways, we cannot isolate the local from the global.

The structure of the book

The papers in this volume move across a wide spectrum of material and archaeological contexts. They illustrate both the scope of current Australian scholarship in contemporary archaeology and some of the specificities and potentialities of Australian-focused and Australian-based research. The book is bracketed either side of a photographic essay by U.K. Frederick. Ursula is an artist whose primary practice focuses on photo media and print media and an archaeologist who specialises in the archaeology of art. Her essay on automobility in contemporary life addresses the material, social and technological impact of a key artefact from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—the car. Her photographs and accompanying text explore the cycles of production, consumption, maintenance and ruin that characterise the motor vehicle industry and the all-consuming relationships that people have with automobiles.

The first three chapters of the book by Steve Brown, Jennifer Clark, and Harriot Beazley and Joanne Scott examine three Australian case studies—attachment and belonging through objects in the suburban home, showbags from the Brisbane Show and the roadside memorials along the Pacific Highway. Using auto-ethnography Steve Brown provides a deeply felt and intimate account of what home and house means to him and how that has changed over the course of his own life. In a highly personal search for the slippery and elusive concepts of attachment and belonging he provides a meditation on the affectual properties of objects recovered from 85 Fairview Street, Arncliffe, Sydney and his own engagement with those objects from different times and memory spaces. Harriot Beazley and Joanne Scott explore the historical and cultural contexts of that much loved and quintessential item of Australian childhood—the showbag. Showbags, sample bags of products, mostly consisting of lollies (sweets) as Beazley and Scott note, are a constant of the agricultural shows of both town and country. They represent a material signature of childhood that contextualises what they describe as the emerging commercialisation and commodification of childhood experiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Like Brown's preceding chapter, Beazley and Scott employ a range of inter-disciplinary methodologies to produce their historical and cultural account of showbags as a cultural phenomenon.

Jennifer Clark's chapter on roadside memorials scattered along the treacherous Pacific Highway of Australia's eastern seaboard re-presents the road as a dynamic corridor of grief. Her compelling account of the material assemblages produced in the wake of motor vehicle accidents

adds a contemporary perspective to other archaeologies of death and mourning (Mytum 2004; Tarlow and Stutz 2013) as well as providing insight into the twenty-first century phenomena of spontaneous commemorations. In her analysis of the roadside memorial Clark demonstrates how a deeply personal gesture can resonate globally. The pervasiveness of the car and the impact of automobility that Clark's study addresses provides a fitting introduction to the photo essay by Frederick.

The four chapters following Frederick's photo essay move from local to global scales. Robert Maxwell considers how we might approach an archaeology of the immaterial, in this case radiation, through an essay on a series of twentieth-century objects and sites that illustrate the modernist reliance on science and technology as a cure-all for society's ills. He positions radioactivity as the key material signifier of the twentieth century and discusses how the use of radioactive isotopes in everyday objects, potions and lotions highlights the ways in which radioactivity seeps in and out of our lives through the intersections of ideology and practice. Alice Gorman takes the barely noticeable but ubiquitous plastic cable tie as a marker of time and activity at the Orroral Tracking Station, located outside Canberra, the capital of Australia. Unlike many contemporary archaeology projects which employ a range of interdisciplinary methods to understand the superabundance of material traces on late industrial period sites, Gorman and her team of student volunteers carried out a standard pedestrian transect survey of the Orroral Tracking Station, much as they would for an Indigenous or historical archaeological project. The results of the survey opened up another avenue to analyse the archaeological and earth-bound signature of space exploration.

Roland Fletcher continues into space in his essay on the size and limits of urban settlements. Taking *Trantor* and *Coruscant*, two famous, planet-sized cities from science fiction, as his entry point, he asks whether it would be possible for there to be cities in the future that do, in fact, cover a whole planet and what sorts of processes and timespans this might entail. Moving backwards and forwards between the archaeologies of the past and science fiction imaginaries of the future, Fletcher muses on whether, given the rates of social and technological change over the past 15,000 or so years, we can ever predict or even imagine what future cities and their accompanying technologies might look like. This leads into the final chapter by Darran Jordan whose essay considers how comic books have taken the figure of the archaeologist and transformed them into a super hero. Jordan surveys the history of comic books and shows how archaeology and archaeologists play a central role in many of these

illustrated adventure stories. An extension of the future-past imaginary discussed by Fletcher in the previous chapter, Jordan looks at four super heroes—Dan Garrett (the Blue Beetle), Adam Strange, Carter Hall (Hawkman), and Kent Nelson (Doctor Fate)—who fight crime by night but by day work as archaeologists. Jordan argues that archaeology is misrepresented in comic books as a realm of adventure and derring-do. Jordan's study extends the work of Holtorf (2005, 2007) and other archaeologists (Frederick 2007; Hiscock 2012; Russell 2002) interested in how archaeology is communicated and interpreted through popular culture channels. Importantly his analysis of the archaeologist-as-superhero genre reveals that these texts have significant implications for the cultures that are the focus of archaeological enquiry and often presented in conflict with the archaeologist interlocuter. Thus, comic book representations of Australian Aboriginal people and their relationships with outsiders reflect a broader regime of inaccurate characterisations and stereotyping (e.g. see Russell 1997) rather than historical or contemporary realities.

Conclusion

It is not our intention to focus here on revisiting debates regarding how the field should or should not be defined. One observation we would make is that the contemporary is often positioned in relation to that which it follows. The art historian Terry Smith (2009, 1), for example, speaks of contemporary art in terms of “the aftermath of modernity” whereas archaeologist Alfredo González-Ruibal (2008), following Auge, identifies an accentuated state of hyper or supermodernity. For many scholars, the contemporary is a means of distancing or even denying modernity (e.g. see Dawdy 2010). The contemporary may also appeal to a state of futurity.

Instead, we would offer that the parameters of the field will ultimately be defined by those who take up its cause. It is not an abstraction to be endlessly theorised but an archaeological practice to be explored, trialled and *worked* through. That is, the field will become more fully realised as we embrace and welcome more research in this arena. This volume thus makes a significant contribution towards the becoming of an archaeology in and of the present and wider world.

Notes

¹ We would like to thank the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, The University of Sydney for generously funding this event and all of those who participated in making it a success.

CHAPTER TWO

PRACTICING ARCHAEOLOGY,
PLACING THINGS:
TOWARD AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY
OF ATTACHMENT

STEVE BROWN

Transience

When I first read *Belonging*, Peter Read's (2000) book concerning ways in which settler Australians articulate feelings of connectivity to place, I came to recognise myself as placeless. By this I mean that my sense of belonging, my identity, was linked to family history, friends, possessions and work environments rather than connected to distinct place(s): I privileged feelings for people and memories associated with things (mementoes, family heirlooms and furniture) over attachments to specific locales.

I attribute this state of affairs to transience, to a history of moving. Frequently moving from house to house is a trait with familial antecedents. My paternal grandfather (Quinten Hepburn Brown, 1891–1955) was born in Scotland and raised in South Africa. As a young man he was one of the first Europeans to establish a farm (c.1911) on the Nzoia River in eastern Kenya. Born in Kenya in 1924, my father (David George Hepburn Brown) began boarding school in Kitale, Kenya, at age six and undertook his secondary schooling in South Africa. He fought in north Africa and Italy in the Second World War and later returned to farming in Kenya. My maternal grandmother (Amelia Mary Rosa) was born to Italian parents in England in 1904 and was schooled at a convent in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana in the province of Lucca, Italy. In 1930, she married an Englishman (John “Jack” Hickman). Together with many of the Italian

side of the family they migrated to Kenya in 1953 in search of a better life. After finishing her nursing training in Birmingham, my mother (June Veronica Hickman) joined her family in Kitale in 1954. My parents met in the bar of the Kitale Club and married at the local Catholic Church on 5 February 1955, 19 days after my paternal grandfather Quinten had died.

I was born in Kitale in 1956. At the age of seven, my family migrated to Western Australia, also to improve their situation. I attended schools in Bakers Hill, Kondinin and Northam before attending the University of Western Australia. By the time I was eighteen I had lived with my family on two continents and in nine different houses (the last at 61 Charles Street, Northam, was the first my parents owned). After graduating with an Arts degree in 1976 (having lived while at university at St Thomas More College and a shared house), I worked as an archaeologist in Western Australia for six years (five residences), travelled overseas for two years and then worked in Tasmania from 1984 to 1989 (two houses). I ran away to join Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus in Brisbane for five years (two residences), before returning to life as an archaeologist in Victoria (two residences). Since July 2000 I have lived in Sydney (five residences), with a brief interlude in Melbourne (an apartment).

My current home, a c.1913 semi-detached cottage at 85 Fairview Street in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe, is the twenty-sixth dwelling I have occupied for an extended period and the seventh abode I have owned. It has been home for Allan and me since August 2007 and is the first residence to which I have developed a sustained sense of connection: the location where my placeless life ceased. The concern of this chapter is to explain how my experience changed and, in particular, the role of material things in the construction of my feelings of place-attachment for the Arncliffe property (Brown 2010, 2012). I consider how archaeological practices (excavating as well as gardening and renovating) are activities that necessitate entanglement with materials and substances. The case study is my home, the method personal and autobiographical and the “mechanism” enabling belonging is in large part the practice of archaeology.

Conceptualising attachment

Place-attachment for social psychologists and anthropologists, human geographers and urban sociologists is typically conceptualised as a process of bonding that occurs between an individual (or group) and place (Altman and Low 1992; Giuliani 2003; Scannall and Gifford 2010). A conspicuous

omission in this framing is the role of material things (natural materials or culturally produced objects). In psychology, for example, place-attachment is usually investigated separately from “possession attachment” despite the recognition of strong commonalities between possession and place (as well as interpersonal) attachment styles (Belk 1992; Kleine and Baker 2004; McBain 2010). The exclusion of material things in concepts of place-attachment stands in marked contrast to scholarship in the humanities and social sciences on people/things relations (e.g. Barad 2007; Latour 2005; Miller 2005; Ingold 2011; in archaeology see Hicks 2010; Hodder 2012).

Based on my doctoral research, I define place-attachment as a distributed property that can emerge through the encounters and entanglements of individuals (or groups), things and place. This meaning is underpinned by a view that each person, place and thing can be conceptualised as uncontained rather than as stable and separate entity. Thus, rather than conceptualising a person as a singularly bounded psychological subject, each human can be theorised as extending beyond their physical body (e.g., skin and nervous system) via, for example, affective processes (Venn 2010; Siegel 2012, 2–10; see also literature on the extended mind, e.g. Malafouris and Renfrew 2010; Menay 2010). Rather than viewing place as fixed, bounded or rooted (i.e. a physical location with spatial coordinates and the “site” of something such as a structure or event), a place can be viewed as unbounded because it comprises a range of associations and heterogeneous meanings “distributed” through networks of people (cf. Cresswell 2009; Malpas 1999). Finally, rather than conceptualising material things as inanimate, they can be viewed as having active power (variously framed as agency, affect and affordances) distributed in ways that co-produce humans and human action (cf. Barad 2007; Jones and Boivin 2010; Latour 2005).

Archaeology as in-place encounter

An archaeologist: a person who finds things, who resurrects objects from worlds that have disappeared and brings them back to the present, who goes forth with his eyes on the ground where the memory of eras gone by lies buried, who scans the surface of the earth, where time is recorded, in search of traces of the subtle workings of memory (Olivier 2012, 3).

Archaeology is an ambitious field of inquiry. It is a material culture-centred discipline concerned with history-making, part of a larger intellectual project investigating what it is to be human (cf. Eriksen 2010; Trigger 2006). While archaeology has historically been about great discoveries, analytical techniques, accumulating factual knowledge and constructing interpretive frameworks, a seldom-considered aspect of archaeological practice is place-making and place-attachment. On this point archaeologist Sue Hamilton (in Bender et al. 2007, 66) observes that archaeology, and excavation in particular, "... can engender a strong sense of, and reaction to, place, yet little of this is evoked or utilised in the interpretation and publication of excavations".

Hamilton makes her remark concerning personal relationships that develop between an archaeologist(s) and a "site" in the context of undertaking fieldwork that draws on phenomenological approaches (cf. Bender 2006; Thomas 2006; Tilley 1994). Phenomenology in archaeology emphasises encounter with the physicality of landscape, embodied experiences of place that can be projected back in time. That is, archaeologists use the approach to "explore the sensory qualities of the archaeological record", where features such as visibility and perspective, sound and texture are emphasised (Lucas 2010, 243). Ultimately the focus of phenomenological approaches applied in archaeology trace changing meanings of landscape in order to create narratives of people and things in different times and places. The feelings and relationships for place that develop via in-field archaeological practice, as Hamilton points out, is rarely a concern.

The practice of archaeology, within the intimate space of my Arncliffe property, has necessitated becoming inextricably intertwined with material things. Archaeology has facilitated and provoked sensory engagement with a material landscape in ways that enable feelings of belonging, a sense of home-place-attachment: that is, archaeological practice broke the pattern of transience described in the introduction. To track some of the people-place-thing entanglements that have arisen in the more than six years I have lived at 85 Fairview Street, I begin by describing a series of object encounters.

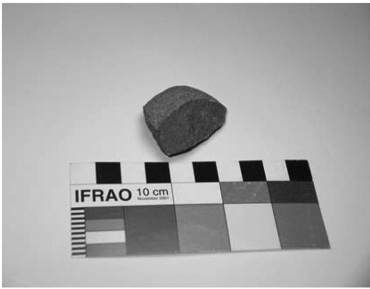


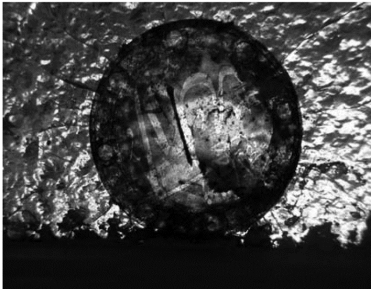


	
Fragment of Aboriginal artefact	Gift card for Mrs L Weidenhofer
	
Hand painted clay gnome	Sticker covering bullet hole in glass panel
	
Peony poppies	Silver foil stars sprinkled over ground surface

Figure 2.1 Things at 85 Fairview Street, Arncliffe. Image: Steve Brown.

Favourite things

I like having things around me that make me feel good. (“Anita” in Marcus 1992, 104)

In the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*, the free-spirited and wayward novice Maria, to cope with moments of despair, vocalises enjoyment by recalling favourite things: Brown-paper packages tied up with string, raindrops on roses, bright copper kettles and warm woollen mittens. For Maria, packages, kettles and mittens elicit positive memories and provoke emotions and feelings of pleasure and happiness (cf. Connerton 1989; Siegel 2010). Choosing to write about a few of my favourite things (Figure 2.1), the vignettes or object-cameos that follow illustrate how in-place material things and I enfold into, and co-produce, one another: though never through song.

Aboriginal stone artefact: A deep-time presence

In undertaking test pit excavations at my suburban block (Brown 2012), six small Aboriginal stone artefacts were recovered. One of the recovered artefacts is a fragment (41 x 27 x 15mm) of a hand-grinding/pounding (or top) stone, a part of a water-worn cobble. In the Sydney Basin, grinding/pounding stones are generally considered women’s tools, used especially in the grinding and beating/pounding of plant foods (e.g. the processing of fern-root, yams, and other tubers) and plant products (e.g. pounding tree bark as part of a process to produce cord or string) (Attenbrow 2002, 91–92, 100–101). Such stones were also used to process ochres and produce coloured pigments for painting bodies, wooden tools or rock surfaces.

To touch the excavated stone fragment is for me to feel past presence, to feel alive to the movement of Aboriginal people through a sentient landscape, people stopping along the ridge top to process plants and minerals, and to almost hear, but not quite hear, voices echoing through a previously open forest setting and across time. I have always found Aboriginal stone artefacts evocative of imagined pasts. However the grinding/pounding stone fragment is particularly powerful to me, not only in its ability to speak to specific tasks, to gender and to lifestyles so different from my own, but because it expresses deep-time Aboriginal connection to my plot of land. The stone is both durable and multi-temporal (cf. Hamilakis 2011, 409). It is also political because the object is an assertion of Dharug Country, of contemporary Aboriginal people’s

connection to this location. And beyond these forms of “memory”, it is personal because it “belongs” to this locale, having likely resided here for longer than Europeans have settled Australia.

Mrs L Weidenhofer: A card and a gift

On the afternoon of Friday 24 August 2007 Allan and I picked up the keys to our newly purchased Arncliffe property. A boarded-over fireplace in the front bedroom immediately aroused our curiosity, already over-stimulated by the excitement of home ownership. We removed the ply-wood panel. Jumbled amongst ash and charcoal was a cache of objects that included a dusty pale-yellow card. Written almost illegibly in pencil is: “card left for”; and in a hand-written dark blue ink: “Mrs L Weidenhofer, Fairview Street, Arncliffe, New South Wales.” Over time we have come to know Mrs Weidenhofer is Winifred Nina Flood, a woman who tenanted the property with her family from 1920 and who died in the house in 1938.

Recovering, retaining and researching the card has for me reawakened Winifred’s presence in the house. The tarnished card’s patina transmits a sense of age and a feeling of the past as present. I do not equate the card with an absent body even though it may carry Winifred’s DNA. However it provoked me to enquire after the Weidenhofers and created a desire for family-arity. In material culture terms, the affect of the card has been to bind me into networks of obligation (Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Latour 2005; Miller 2010), for example, by urging me to undertake historical research. As my knowledge of the Weidenhofer family accumulated, and as I interacted with the card more and more, Winifred has re-inhabited our house. While Clarence Roy Tasker, the landlord at the time of Winifred’s death, may have wanted to erase the material traces of Winifred by enclosing them in the bedroom fireplace, I welcome her return. I am delighted that our bodily presences are simultaneously imprinted into the fabric of the building. I am not haunted by Winifred’s death or her material presence: Winifred, the gift card and I reside quite happily together.

Gnome: A German presence

In 2008, Allan uncovered a decapitated miniature gnome while removing the lawn at the front of the house. The gnome’s smile, his eternal happiness, is unaffected by the separation of head from body. This gnome is 11cm high and he has a full bushy beard. His well-rounded buttocks rest