

Newsletter No 27

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Emeritus Faculty

Australian National University



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John Mulvaney: Archaeologist/Historian writing on a blank page

A country lad, I entered Melbourne University in 1946, following service in the RAAF. Thanks to the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme funding, I was able to enter academia.

An Honours degree in History was followed by a Masters thesis on the archaeological evidence for the economy and technology of Britain at the time of the Roman invasion. This alerted me to the intriguing problems of interpreting archaeological evidence, and led me to seek publications on Australian archaeology. Few existed, and none by professional archaeologists, yet the continent must have held potential. Except for volumes about European sailors probing the coastline, Australia before the British invasion was a blank.

With a First for my MA, I was qualified to apply for an ANU research scholarship. In those wondrous times, scholars voyaged abroad to research. Bravely, I stated my terms to the selectors. Because I lacked basic training in archaeology I was unable to undertake graduate study in that field.

When researching my MA I read stimulating publications by Cambridge archaeologists, so I claimed my need to read for an undergraduate degree there. I would specialise in Palaeolithic archaeology



John Mulvaney: "A Eureka moment"

(what today would be termed hunter-gatherer studies).

The selectors accepted my demands. I suspect that I am the only ANU doctoral scholar permitted to enroll as an

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undergraduate: full marks to the flexible early ANU.

Cambridge proved a memorable experience, where I met and associated with eminent archaeologists. During vacations I eagerly gained field experience on digs in England, Wales, Ireland and Denmark.

In 1952 I joined a small ten-week expedition to Hava Fteah Cave in Cyrenaica, Libya. The trench in this immense cave reached a depth of nine metres, penetrating through 70,000 years of human occupation. The techniques employed to dig, sort and pack the finds influenced my Australian fieldwork practice.

No archaeological posts existed in Australia, so upon my return to Melbourne in 1954 I lectured in Ancient World history for ten years. During vacations I initiated fieldwork, restricted by the shortage of funding in those times.

In 1956 I commenced four seasons of excavating two rock shelters on the Murray River, SA. I coaxed some free radiocarbon samples from an American laboratory, proving human presence through about almost 5000 years, the first dated stratified sequence in Australia. The potential of archaeology for documenting environmental evidence was demonstrated. Identifiable bones of 30 mammalian species were recovered. These included now extinct Tasmanian Devil and Thylacine, between 3900 and 3200 years ago; and a dingo skeleton dated to 3000 years. The evidence indicated that around this latter time the Murray River experienced its greatest flood.

During 1960 Reg Orr, a Charleville enthusiast, sent me images of Queensland rock paintings. Observing that cave walls descended into promising floor deposits, I asked Orr to take me there. I flew to Charleville, from where he drove me, in his old jeep, to the mountains north of Mitchell. We dug trial trenches at three sites. At Kenniff Cave, where the floor was stratified through three metres, I collected charcoal samples which I managed to have dated without cost at the National Physical Laboratory in the UK. Back at Kenniff in 1962, I experienced a Eureka moment when

the Flying Doctor radio conveyed results of the radiocarbon dating. Aboriginal occupation extended back some 16,000 years, back into the Pleistocene. Australian history had a deep past!

By 1962 my archaeological isolation ended. Isabel McBryde was working in New England. Jack Golson was appointed to ANU, two posts were filled at Sydney University and the WA Museum boasted a curator of archaeology.

In 1965 I joined Jack Golson in the Research School of Pacific Studies. Free of teaching duties, I completed my Kenniff Cave report before engaging in a survey of coastal Arnhem Land. I sought sites where Indonesian trepang fishers had camped to process their catch. It proved exciting exploration, justifying a PhD topic, comprehensively achieved by Campbell MacKnight.

I took an intellectual diversion to write a centenary account of the 1868 Aboriginal cricket tour of England. I also completed the *Prehistory of Australia* (Thames and Hudson, 1969), the first attempt to describe Australian history before 1788. By the time that I revised the text for Penguin in 1974 it became necessary to include the many new discoveries and insights. The most significant were the discoveries by RSPacS research scholar, Jim Bowler, at Lake Mungo. In 1973 Jim and I excavated a trench on the lake's former beach to confirm the antiquity of the eroding human burials, today dated to some 42,000 years. These burial practices establish that symbolic thought and ritual behaviour extend back into the deep past of humanity. I was honoured to introduce the nomination of the Willandra Lakes as a World Heritage Property at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Sydney, 1981.

In 1969 I co-led an archaeological team to Sulawesi, jointly with R.P. Soejono. This led to fruitful ANU links with Indonesian archaeologists, which have continued. I held the foundation Chair of Prehistory (now Archaeology) in the Faculty of Arts between 1971 and 1985. It proved a rewarding period, when many students were attracted

to the discipline.

I abandoned fieldwork to become a committee man, busily combining this with teaching. Between 1964 and 1980 I was an executive member of AIATSIS and its chair 1982–84. I was appointed a foundation member of the Australian Heritage Commission 1976–82, and a member of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections 1974–75. This last recommended the establishment of the National Museum, which was delayed for a quarter of a century and then ignored our blueprint. More successful was our exhortation to government for conservation laboratories at museums and art galleries, and for materials conservation training at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education.

From the 1950s I had campaigned for State and Federal legislation to protect Indigenous and historical sites and artefacts. This was background to my activist involvement over the Tasmanian Franklin River dam, 1982–83, culminating in the swearing of affidavits by the late Rhys Jones and myself in the High Court case. This was followed by my attempt to preserve the site of Governor Phillip's residence in Sydney. Later, I represented Australia ICOMOS and joined ANU Geography colleagues in the battle over the Jabiluka uranium mine, when the World Heritage Committee rated Kakadu as a place in danger.

Then came a fight to prevent forest clearance at Recherche Bay, Tasmania, where French explorers recorded significant contact with Aboriginal people, while charting the region in 1792–93.

During 1976–77 I was Commonwealth Visiting Professor at Cambridge, and from 1984–85 I held the Harvard Chair of Australian Studies.

Following my retirement at 60, I chaired the ACT Heritage Committee for three years and was Honorary Secretary to the Australian Academy of the Humanities 1989–96. Since retirement I have written, co-authored or edited 15 books.

John Mulvaney

Archaeology withstands politics - Emeritus Professor Jack Golson



Jack Golson (above) was born in 1926 in Rochdale, Lancashire, England, and attended Rochdale Municipal High School for Boys. In 1943, he won a scholarship in history to Cambridge University (Peterhouse College), but was called up for national service after his first year at Cambridge.

In 1948 he returned to resume his studies, and in the following academic year switched from history to archaeology. He graduated BA (Hons) in 1950 and MA in 1952. In 1954 he moved to New Zealand to a lectureship in prehistory in the recently established Department of Anthropology at Auckland University College, as it then was. This was the beginning of a career in archaeology for Jack that now extends over more than 50 years.

In the later 1950s Ralph Bulmer and Murray Groves joined the Auckland department from ANU. Under their influence Jack applied, successfully, for the first post in

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prehistory established at ANU, in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology in the Research School of Pacific Studies, which was emerging as a major centre of research in the Pacific and Asian fields. He moved to Canberra in May 1961.

To prepare himself for his new responsibilities he undertook a six-month international study tour visiting leading scholars and institutions engaged in Pacific and Southeast Asian archaeology, particularly those within the region itself.

On his way from Australia to Europe Jack had to bypass the US (except for a day between planes in Honolulu) because the Americans would not issue him an entry visa, a cold-war consequence of his membership of the Communist Party in England many years before. This membership was to have a continuing consequence for Jack in Australia – the Menzies Government refused him a visa to visit Papua New Guinea to initiate the archaeological research program that the terms of his ANU appointment required him to do. Fortunately for Jack, John Crawford, then Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies and later Vice Chancellor of ANU, used his influence with the Department of External Affairs (under whose aegis Papua New Guinea was then supervised in a semi-colonial relationship with Australia) to have the decision reversed. In 1965 Jack began what would become an extended and still continuing connection with Papua New Guinea.

During his visit to NZ at the start of his study tour, Jack had met Clare Joe. Later in the trip they met again in the UK, where they married before beginning the journey to Australia. Clare persuaded Jack to start the Asian segment of his tour in India, and as a result he was able to establish scholarly connections that were important for the future development of his and ANU's work in archaeology.

As Jack had found while working in Auckland, progress in archaeological research was best made by bringing together people with complementary skills (theoretical and technical) in the many disciplines that help to reveal the cultures

and activities of prehistoric humans – geomorphology and geology, pedology, botany, zoology, genetics, as well as the mainstays of human geography and anthropology. Jack found Canberra a rich source of such skills – at ANU, CSIRO and the Bureau of Mineral Resources – practised by enthusiastic and able practitioners who were prepared to share their time and their resources. Similar links were forged with scholars at universities and museums elsewhere in Australia, all of which contributed to the development of archaeology that characterised the national academic scene in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jack attributes the successful development of archaeology at ANU over this period to its readiness at School and Departmental levels to support a broad program of research in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the nearer Pacific Islands, and to build a team of academic staff, postgraduate research students, and experienced field and laboratory research officers appropriately equipped to execute the program. Wal Ambrose and Ron Lampert were appointed to research support roles in the early 1960s, and over the following decade academic staff such as John Mulvaney and Rhys Jones (Australian studies), Les Groube and Jim Allen (Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea) and Alan Thorne (physical anthropology) were recruited. They were ably supported by postgraduate students working in all these areas, and in Timor.

In 1969 archaeology was accorded disciplinary independence at ANU, and Jack was appointed as Professor and Foundation Chair of Prehistory. By this time the direction of his own research had been determined by the first Papua New Guinea excavations that he was associated with, in the upper Wahgi Valley near Mt Hagen in 1966, focused on the development of agriculture in the New Guinea highlands.

The following forty years of multidisciplinary research by staff and research students from ANU and other institutions resulted in important new information on not only the great age (at least 6500-7000 years ago), but also the independence, of agricultural origins in New Guinea. As a result, the key

site of Kuk has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. Jack and his colleagues are currently engaged in the publication of a volume explaining, and summarising, the significance of their work at this site.

During the 1980s problems of funding and governance began to emerge in the Research School; these worsened through the 1990s. Staffing levels and budgets fell short of the needs of the research efforts planned. Field- and laboratory-based departments like Prehistory and Biogeography & Geomorphology were particularly hard-hit; the union of prehistory and biogeography in the present Department of Archaeology and Natural History was one result. A later consequence was the formation of the Centre for Archaeological Research as a focus for archaeological and related interests within ANU, straddling the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, and the Faculty of Arts.

By this time Jack had completed his ANU professorial tenure, which came to an end in December 1991. However, he has continued his association with his old department as a visiting fellow, as an ANU emeritus professor, and as chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Archaeological Research. He expects the results of the New Guinea research and survey program to appear in a multi-authored volume in the near future. Jack and Clare Golson continue to live in the house in O'Connor that became their first home, and they its first occupants, 48 years ago.

Written by Peter Stewart
Synopsis of ANUEF OHP Interview
(17 Sep 2008)

Scholarly publications

The final drafts of the Code of Practice for Scholarly Publication and Dissemination at ANU and the associated Guidelines for the ANU Research Repository have been published. (see http://info.anu.edu.au/ovc/Committees/060P_P_Research/Discussion):

The documents have been prepared by a Working Party led by Dr Danny Kingsley, and noted by the University Joint Committee.

Books and authors

The Wizard from the Isles

Author: Ian Rae, ANUEF member
ISBN 1-84921-001-2
Published by Kennedy and Boyd
www.kennedyandboyd.co.uk

Reviewed by Giles Pickford

"I knew from a very early stage of my life that my Father had capacities beyond the gift of other men". So begins the story of a young boy born on the Isle of Lewis, the 'long isle' of the Outer Hebrides.

The early chapters of this strange tale are full of descriptions which are so vivid, frightening and beautiful that I was compelled to ask the author, Ian Rae, a member of the ANU Emeritus Faculty, whether they were in any sense autobiographical. His reply was that he had spent time in the Western Isles and other parts of Scotland, but that the novel is entirely a work of imagination.

Even so, some of the people who one encounters in these early chapters are so strongly portrayed that the reader often feels that this is a first-hand account.

The Father, who is idolised by the boy Robbie Taran, has a major part to play in the early part of the book. He slowly reveals the magical qualities that he possesses and the boy begins to realise that he has similar gifts. He has 'the sight' as it is described by the Celtic people who know it so well. He also has other powers that cause him to be noticed by his friends and acquaintances, and he knew that being noticed was not good and tried hard to suppress his powers. Sometimes in an emergency this was not possible.

At this stage Robbie Taran's father is swept away from a fishing vessel and disappears from the story for a while. The family enters

a very troubled time in the isolated village where the people were superstitious and hostile to 'the other' if the other was different.

In this second stage of the story things become a little bit more humdrum as Robbie works his way through the last years of school. He falls in love with an older woman who returns his love, but who for financial reasons cannot let it be obvious as she is already married to a homosexual who ignores her and is absent most of the time, but who keeps her bound to him in order to disguise his sexual orientation.

Robbie's mother eventually realises that she cannot stay on the Isle of Lewis and decides to remove herself and her family and go south for Robbie to pursue his education at the University of Edinburgh.

As Robbie comes to the end of his studies in Medicine the Great War breaks out and he volunteers to work as a medical orderly in the battle fields of France. The descriptions of the war, the soldiers and their ghastly predicaments are written with an energy and fire that overwhelms the reader. These are harrowing pages. Robbie gradually comes to specialise in psychiatric medicine and his mind and powers grow in strength.

At various stages in the book Robbie encounters strangers who offer him guidance of a kind which shows that they know him, even though he does not know them. There is a feeling that some of these strangers might be his dead father, but this is not clarified.

It is not the purpose of a review to reveal the whole story, only enough to compel readers to open the book themselves, or put it aside.

Suffice it to say that Robbie is helped by these strangers to fully develop his powers and eventually become a wizard. The later parts of the book are filled with the most extraordinary events before and including the Second World War. There are harrowing and sometimes disgusting descriptions of violence and rape, and other descriptions of Central France which are totally beautiful.

This book is about the occult. It is related in its themes with the works of Nostradamus, Edgar Allan Poe, Madame Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley, William Blake, William Butler Yeats, Carlos Castaneda, and many others.

The question that the reader faces through all this mystery is whether there is any basis in it. I have had many discussions with people of a sceptical nature. These are people who sincerely believe that there is a rational explanation for everything. Joan of Arc heard voices and therefore she was clearly schizophrenic, etc. They are also sceptical about the various stories that have come down to us over the ages. We have all had these arguments. If you believe them you would not read any of the Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman or Norse Myths: and you would be the poorer for it.

I am not so sure that everything has a rational explanation. We have the recent example of the disappearance of the little girl Kiesha from her home at Baulkham Hills, and how an Aboriginal Elder with the "sight" came looking for her. She pointed to a place and the searchers uncovered a dismembered torso of a woman murdered many years before.

I have personal experience of a close friend who had terrible premonitions on two separate occasions when disaster was befalling another member of the family who were nowhere near her at the time. She was frightened by her two experiences and does not want to go there again.

There are still things that have no rational explanation. So I tend to be sceptical about sceptics.

I commend Ian Rae's book as well worth delving into.

Memoir of Arabia

Alex McGoldrick, a member of the Emeritus Faculty and former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, has written "*A Memoir of Arabia*" - his recollections of three years spent in the desert kingdom. It throws light on Saudi society and the influence of Wahabbist Islam

on it and observes at first hand the effects of the Gulf War on Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States.

Copies are available from the ANU Co-op Bookshop, quality bookstores in Canberra and from the author
alexanderm@grapevine.com.au

Book launch

Words spoken at the launch of John Molony's *By Wendourie*

by Barry Ninham

I have known John and his family for 40 years. It is a time outside the period covered in *By Wendourie*. All of us who know him have experienced his constant unconditional love and support. All who know him have wondered where that extraordinary inner strength comes from.

This book tells us whence it derives. A published review praises the book. But it also hints, or its author would like to believe, that Molony is melancholy about life. That may or may not be true. My overwhelming reaction was different. I thought it ought rather to have been titled: *By Wendourie. A Triumph*.

It is written at several different levels simultaneously.

The literal life story is fascinating enough. It deals sometimes with the rejection of doubt, never of Christ, but with the framework of His bureaucracy. But it deals too with the joy in fulfillment of his early calling. These are explicit in the description of his assistance one time of Padre Pio in the Mass; and growing awareness of his leadership capacity: and in his work with the poor on the outskirts of Rome.

His life in Rome contrasted so dramatically with the gaudiness of the American Church in Boston, that return to the Australia of that time after so long away was inevitably a bigger shock than it would otherwise have been.

For the presumably superhuman soldiers of Christ, battle fatigue for frontline priests and debriefing were not allowed to exist.

The book recalls, for those of us who remember, the pettiness, poverty of spirit and multiple, angry divisions within the post-depression Australia of that time. Protestants and Catholics hardly spoke, even neighbors, and interfaith marriages not contemplated. The Church, in its appallingly uncharitable narrowness, echoed the worst of North Ireland. The hierarchy left some things not to admire. It will be a revelation to the young of today.

The book is an allegory for life itself, the story of grappling with and reconciling of the human failings of the Institution with the simple message of Christ.

The story is of how he attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable and retain his faith despite rejection. It was a life-long task that transcends the life of one individual. The lessons are for us all: and for the Church.

Part of what this book has to say seems to be embodied in this insight: "Civilisations are mortal". St Augustine echoed this thought when in a simple sermon he summed up the true function of earthly civilisation in a single illuminating phrase: an architect builds a durable house with the aid of a temporary scaffolding.

"Civilisations are the impressive, complicated and bewildering scaffolding, *machinamenta temporalia*. The house which rises above it is, he maintains, the Eternal City of God". As for civilisations, so too for the Church and for us all.

What the book tells us leads us to honour you, John, because you were self sufficient and remained steadfast to that which you had once believed, and still believe to be valid. And by so doing you have laid us all under an obligation.

Barry Ninham, 15 August 2010.

Pickford's Theory of Work

Giles Pickford's theory is based on carefully observing the members of the ANU Emeritus Faculty

When we consider why academics continue to work long after their pay has been stopped, we begin to realise that unpaid work is not work. By definition that means that it must be play which is the opposite of work.

Most really important mental work is play because it is unpaid: or insufficiently paid which is similar.

Coal mining is work because if you didn't pay the miners they would do something else and there would be no miners.

Thinking is play because people will think for the sheer joy of it. The only reason why thinkers are paid is in order to stop them wasting their time working.

Giles Pickford
www.gilespickford.net

Metrification – a conversation

An Emeritus Faculty Seminar on Research Assessment and Publication Metrics – the Beginning of an ERA? Will be held on Monday 18 October from 4.15pm to 6.15pm, at the Haydon Allen Tank

How is research excellence measured and evaluated? What are its key signs and indicators? The Australian Research Council *Excellence in Research for Australia* scheme (ERA) has now received 350,000 research outputs nationally from universities, the assessment of which is likely to flow through in future years in budget allocations.

The long term effect of evaluations on scholarly publishing and communication, for example, through citation measurements, ERA journal rankings and university league tables, has yet to be assessed both for institutions and individual researchers. How accurate a system of measurement is ERA likely to provide: what are its probable strengths, and what are its possible flaws

and shortcomings? What impact is ERA likely to have on Australian universities, its researchers and publishers?

The seminar, hosted by the ANU's Emeritus Faculty, is open to all on campus. The speakers will address the main issues but allowing maximum time for questions and audience interaction.

The program and speakers:

Chair: John Molony, Chair Emeritus Faculty, ANU

Overview: Research Excellence Evaluation Colin Steele, Emeritus Fellow, ANU

The Australian Research Council - ERA National Perspectives Andrew Calder, Director, Research Performance and Analysis, ARC

The ANU Experience John Wellard, Director ANU Research Office

Perverse and Beneficial Outcomes From Research Assessment Professor Andrew Cockburn, Director, College of Medicine, Biology and Environment, ANU

Scholarly Publishing Economics: an International Research Perspective. Professor John Houghton, Victoria University

Future Publishing Metrics – The Way Forward? Dr Danny Kingsley, Manager Scholarly Communications, ANU

Research Impact – the Wider Dimension Dr Claire Donovan, Lecturer in Sociology, ANU

Discussion

Cultural Conflict in a Democracy

The theme of this year's annual conference of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, to be held at the National Library of Australia on October 14-15, is Cultural Conflict in a Democracy.

The Independent Scholars Association of Australia was established in 1995 to encourage all who, independently of institutions, offer well-founded studies in the Humanities, the Arts, the Social and Physical Sciences and in ideas of cultural significance. Membership also includes academics, many of them retired.

The conference's annual lecture will be given by Robyn Williams AM on *The Sons & Daughters of Goebbels – Lies and the Democratic Process*.

The program is:

Thursday 14 October

8.45 Registration begins

9.30 Welcome and opening Margy Burn, Assistant Director-General, Australian Collections and Reader Services, NLA.

9.45 Process **Doug Cocks**: Scientist, author, ISAA member on *Global overshoot: How to think about the world's converging problems*.

Nicholas Brown, Senior research fellow, History Program, RISS, ANU. Co-founder, Australian Policy and History Network on *History and policy making*.

11am Morning tea

11.30 Costs and opportunities **Kenneth Davidson**, Co-editor, D!SSSENT, contributor to *The Age on The case for higher taxation*

Trevor Cobbold: Convener, Save Our Schools public education advocacy group and former economist for the Australian Productivity Commission, on *Education (title TBA)*.

12.30 Lunch

2pm Religion, **John Greenwell**, Retired lawyer, ISAA member, on *Islamicism, the Sharia and the treatment of women by Muslims in a democratic society*.

John Hosie, Author, ISAA member, on *Cultural conflict in a religious order*.

3pm Afternoon Tea

3.30 Cultural paradigms **Laila Haglund**, Archaeologist, ISAA member, on *Nationalisms going haywire*.

Jill Bough, Conjoint academic, University of Newcastle, ISAA member, on *Reconsidering the feral donkey: conflicting cultures and solutions*.

6pm Annual Lecture **Robyn Williams AM**, on *The Sons & Daughters of Goebbels – Lies and the Democratic Process*.

Robyn Williams, from the ABC Science Show and Ockham's Razor, is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and, among his many awards, he has been presented with the United Nations Media Peace Prize.

Conference dinner at the Harem Turkish Restaurant, Green Square, Kingston.

Friday 15 October

9.30 Environment **Bryan Furnass**, Author, Foundation Director of the ANU Health Service, on *Pandora's Box—challenges and opportunities for human and planetary health*.

Tony Kevin, Author, a 30-year career in the Australian foreign service, and currently an honorary visiting fellow at the ANU's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, on *Communicating the truth of Australia's climate change crisis*.

10.30 Morning tea

11am Perspectives **Ann Moyal**, Author, ISAA member, on *Science as a liberating influence in a democracy*.

Wendy Michaels, Author and former lecturer, ISAA member, on *The play's the thing: Millicent Preston Stanley's use of the play to resolve cultural conflict*.

12 noon Lunch

1.30 Society **Romaldo Giurgola**, award-winning architect, professor and author whose buildings include the Australian Parliament House. *Title TBA*.

Martin Thomas, Cultural historian, ISAA member, on *Aboriginal history (title TBA)*.

2.30 Conference ends.

The Conference web site is at

www.isaa.org.au

Redbird v bluebird and the Principle of Unknowability

Barry Ninham thinks this essay and the Principle of Unknowability was attributable to Joe Mayer, a famous statistical physicist at Chicago and Illinois who supervised Barry's Ph. D. supervisor Elliott Montroll. It was written anywhere between late 1930s to early '40s. Joe died long ago as he would have been about 50 in 1940. It has been Barry's hands since 1962. Read on!

The principle of Unknowability, now frequently known as "Wandheim's Principle", has been the subject of so much discussion and is of such general importance that a brief resume of the historical events which lead to its discovery may be of interest to those who were not themselves present at these events.

At 10pm on Friday, 10 June it was clear that a vote on whether the redbird or the bluebird should be chosen as the state bird would, in any event be close, if not a tie.

Representative Stanislaus of Albernathy County then moved that \$50,000 of state money be appropriated to make a contract with the "Albuquerque Poll" or some equally competent private business, the purpose of the contract being to ascertain the wishes of the general population of this great state as to which of the two birds should become the state emblem.

Representative O'Brien of Brownsville asked Representative Stanislaus if, in the absence of a seconder, he would admit an amendment to the motion resolving that the legislators would abide by the result of the poll. After some discussion and rephrasing of the motion the legislature appropriated \$100,000 for this purpose and adjourned for the summer recess at 10.45pm.

The representative of Albuquerque Poll Inc. was, at that time intensely interested in a new form of poll contract by which the company undertook to furnish a result with fixed statistical reliability rather than one in which a fixed number of persons were to be polled.

A contract was finally signed by the company guaranteeing a redbird-bluebird answer at the 97% confidence level, a contract which promised, under favourable circumstances to be highly lucrative to the company, since this reliability might be attained by polling as few as several thousand properly selected individuals, and could hardly be expected to require more than several tens of thousands of responses.

Unfortunately the circumstances were unpropitious. At the end of the summer "Albuquerque Poll Inc" filed bankruptcy papers after reporting that with responses from 50% of the state's inhabitants the results were:

Redbird 36.93%
Bluebird 36.92%
Greybird 10.07%
Undecided 16.08%

which gave redbird the edge but with zero confidence level.

It is, incidentally, of interest that the results of this poll formed the basis of no less than three PhD. dissertations in Psychology which have been published in the three years since it was taken. All three of these have concerned themselves with the relation of the 10.07% Greybird response to the percent of colour blindness in the state population.

In one of these dissertations it is asserted that the figure 10.07% represents the most precise measurement of the fraction of colour blind persons ever made in large population samples.

In one of the other dissertations a correction for a "conformity response" is applied, whereas in the third both "conformity response" and "unconformity response" corrections are applied.

At the fall [autumn] session of the legislature it was decided to submit the bluebird-redbird question to the state university. Upon receiving the formal request from the legislature the chancellor of the university referred the documents to the dean of the Graduate Division who, in turn sent them to the chairman of the Educational Policy Committee.

The Educational Policy committee returned them to the dean with the statement that the question came under the purview of the chancellor's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee decided that the matter should be laid before the full Senate of the University, and a special meeting of the Senate was called for the afternoon of 21 November. There follows an excerpt from the minutes for this first meeting

The Minutes

Professor Lund (Biochemistry) explained that the colour of the redbird feathers was due to a derivative of carotene, (the formula of the pigment was given on the blackboard), which in turn was synthesised by the bird with the aid of an enzyme now known as carotenecardinalase.

This enzyme had been first isolated in the biochemistry laboratories of the university. In view of this, and the fact that bluebird feathers contained no pigment but were merely the result of some interesting physical phenomena, he pleaded that the redbird should be chosen as state bird.

Professor Heath (Physics) recalled the phenomena of the blue colour of bluebird feathers had interested that late Professor Jones (Optics), and that far from being an uninteresting phenomenon, it was due to reinforced reflection in the blue region of the spectrum from an ingenious layering of air bubbles in the feather material. He believed that Professor Jones had succeeded in measuring the refractive index of the feather material and had developed the mathematical theory of the blue colour.

Professor Braunstein (Physics), Petrowski (Physics) and Brewer (Physics) spoke supporting Professor Heath and called for adoption of the bluebird as state emblem.

Professor Wining (Organic chemistry) recalled that the feathers on which Professor Jones had made the index of refraction measurements had been immersed in propionic alcohol for the measurement. This had dissolved several essential interstitial compounds in the feather protein, and that

the feathers were no longer blue after the measurement was made.

There followed some heated discussion on the floor unrecognised by the chair, between Professors Heath, Braunstein, Lund, Wining and James (Organic Chemistry). Order was restored and Professor Ornstein (Economics) was given the floor.

Professor Ornstein spoke as an amateur gardener and bird watcher. It was his impression that redbird diet was entirely of seed, whereas bluebirds were insect eaters. As a gardener he favoured bluebirds. Professor Sandranatharin (Social Ethics) spoke on the relation between the ethics of a society and the symbols chosen to represent the society.

At the end of fifteen minutes the chairman reminded Professor Sandranatharin of the time and requested him to complete his argument within five minutes. Professor Sandranatharin immediately sat down.

Professor Winfield Scott (History) rose to ask Professor Sandranatharin whether he preferred red to blue. Professor Sandranatharin replied that he would unhappily serve a state that chose a carnivorous animal as its emblem.

Professor von Bohlen (Geology) averred that he preferred a more virile carnivore to a vegetarian.

There followed some unrecognised discussion on the floor.

Professor Mary Osgood (Home Economics) asked to be informed of the mating habits and nest care customs of the two birds. She understood that among some birds pairing was for life, whereas among other species a new mate was chosen each year.

Professor Perkus (Animal Psychology) pointed out that Conrad Lorenz had suggested the generalisation that within species conflict among carnivores was largely formalised and seldom lethal. On the other hand similar conflicts between members of the same species of herbivores frequently ended in the death of one of the participants. He gave several known

examples among fishes, mammals and amphibians.

Professor Estermann (Agricultural Economics) stated that the diet of both redbirds and bluebirds had been extensively studied; that although redbirds were indeed principally seed eaters their seed diet was 98% weed seeds, in addition to which they consumed a considerable number of aphids, but that the chief constituent of the bluebird diet was the beneficial regulus beetle that destroyed many plant pests.

Professor Ornstein rose to state that he had changed his position and would prefer redbirds.

Professor Johnson (Ornithology) averred that the dietary studies were misleading since the studies on redbird diet had been confined to the month of September when the only seed available was weed seed, whereas the bluebird studies had been made in a district and year for which the regulus beetle had been uncommonly ubiquitous.

Professor Sandstein (Graphic Arts) suggested that he preferred the rarer yellow bird to either.

Professor Winsome (Physical Chemistry) supported Professor Sandstein by saying that the yellow bird coloration was due to a combination of the pigmentation in redbird and the physical diffraction effects present in bluebird.

There followed more unrecognised arguments on the floor between members of the Physics, Chemistry and Biochemistry Departments. Order was restored and Professor Jameson (Abstract Art) was recognised.

Professor Jameson moved that a green bird be selected. Professor Johnson objected that no green bird existed in the state. Professor Jameson found this immaterial. Professor van Bohlen remarked that the cocktail hour had approached and made a motion for adjournment.

The chair commented that although the motion was not debatable he would be

forced to call a second special meeting to consider the question on the following Monday if the motion carried. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Special meeting

At the fifth special meeting Professor Wandheim, the brilliant young appointee to the recently-created chair of Psycho-Physics, was the first to ask for the floor. He asked the indulgence of the Senate, but announced that he had discovered a new principle which he felt was pertinent to the discussion, and requested that he be permitted to expound the principle.

Several of the biology division, which division had originally opposed the establishment of the chair of Psycho-Physics, were noticed to move restlessly in their seats. Without waiting for permission from the chair, Professor Wandheim launched into an exposition of the principle of Unknowability.

Briefly the theorem can be described as follows. Suppose that N scholars are asked a single question which appears on the surface to have a yes-no answer. Each of these scholars by virtue of the fact that they are according to the initial assumption, scholars, will have (at least) one other question which must be answered in conjunction with the first. This creates $N+1$ questions each with a possible yes-no answer, or, in all $2N+1$ possible answers. There are only N scholars to give answers. The probability that two or more answers will be identical is then approximately $N^2/2N+2$. Now for sufficiently large N this probability approached zero in value, indeed for $N = 100$ it is of order 10^{-26} . Since, however, no answer can be judged correct (except by the man giving the answer) unless it is concurred in by at least one other scholar it follows that, in principle, no answer can be obtained to any question by asking a large assembly of scholars. Since, further, only scholars can be trusted to give a correct answer, and since from them no answer can be obtained, it follows that no reliable answer to any question can ever be found.

This theorem, Professor Wandheim modestly proposed should be called the 'Principle of Unknowability'. In view of the mathematical rigour with which it can be derived Professor Wandheim then moved that the question of the redbirds versus bluebirds should be returned to the state legislature with a brief statement of the principle.

This brilliant speech was ended by overwhelming applause from the assembled Senate. Even many members of the division of biology joined in the acclaim. The motion was passed unanimously.

Sequel

On 14 February the state legislature adopted the daisy as the state flower, and on the same day, rejected the proposal of the Trustees to increase by 15% the appropriation for the state university.

Monthly get-together

ANUEF meets monthly on the **first Wednesday of every month** for members to get together informally. The meetings are held in the Molony Room. Members can bring their own lunch, or buy one from Caterina's next door. Drinks are available for a donation of \$2 and tea, coffee and juice are available. There is a theme for each lunch. For the October lunch the theme was "The Boat People" which was introduced by John Molony.

Please come if you can. There is no need to RSVP.

ANUEF Lecture diary dates

20 October – Shirley Pipitone *'The Social Value of Lake Burley Griffin'*

17 November - Sue Wareham *'Nuclear Disarmament: how to achieve it and why now?'*

15 December - ANUEF AGM + Christmas Party
15 December – ANUEF AGM + Christmas Party

Members' Benefits

Check this web site for a list of benefits enjoyed by members.

<http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus/benefits.html>

If you have an article, a notice or a letter to the editor for publications send it to ian.mathews7@bigpond.com by mid-November

Program for the ANUEF Excursion to Kioloa

Here is the interim program for our excursion to Kioloa. Fifteen have enrolled so far. If you are interested contact Judith Caton on judith.caton@anu.edu.au

FRIDAY 5TH NOV

4.00 pm arrival and settling in.
5.00 pm drinks and nibbles with talk by Fergus Thompson on getting out of trouble with the law
7.00 (or 6.30) pm dinner followed by a relaxing evening

SATURDAY 6TH NOV

8.00 am breakfast
9.00 am other activities like walks, fishing, swimming
10.30 am morning tea followed by more activities
12.30 pm lunch
5.00 pm drinks and nibbles and discussions with participants from the East Coast Project - an ANUEF project investigating the European discoveries of the Australian East Coast
7.00 pm seafood buffet

SUNDAY 7TH

8.00 am breakfast
Departure

Next ANUEF Newsletter out in December

To save money we are e-mailing *ANUEF News* to those with e-mail. We will continue to post it to those members without e-mail. Please let us know if you do not like this policy. At this stage it is experimental.