

Jan 2025

GE NEWS



Vol 32 No 1

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

TREASURES:
JOHN
McDOUALL
STUART'S TABLE
Art Lab

FROM
SEXTANTS TO
SATELLITES:
WHERE ON
EARTH AM I?
Chris Rawlinson

RGSSA ANNUAL
DINNER
12 DEC 2024
QUIZ QUESTIONS

ROCK ART AUSTRALIA
Professor Andy Gleadow
AO FAA
& Ian Waina

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC
FOUNDED 10TH JULY 1885 ~ INCORPORATED JULY 1918

www.rgssa.org.au

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY'S PURPOSE IS TO

- Advance public awareness of, and interest in, geography and related disciplines, including environmental issues.
- Encourage research and scholarship in geography.
- Recognise and reward achievements in geography.
- Commemorate past achievements of significance to geography.

THIS IS ACHIEVED THROUGH

- A program of public lectures, exhibitions and field activities.
- Publishing geographical material, including research papers and items of popular and topical interest.
- Encouraging interest in all aspects of environmental, economic and social geography.
- Maintaining an extensive library and historical collections.
- Providing grants for research and awards to geography students and outstanding geographers.
- Conserving and managing collections and monuments relating to the geographical heritage of South Australia and other parts of Australia.

MORTLOCK WING

Members should be aware that from time to time the Mortlock Wing may be hired out for functions and as such is closed to the public...

This does not deny RGSSA members' access to their Library or Office

Members need only to approach security staff stipulating they are RGSSA members requiring access to their rooms.

LIBRARY HOURS

Due to Library refurbishment times shown below are not applicable during Dec/Jan/Feb
Tuesday to Friday -10.00am to 1.00pm - other times by prior arrangement
Most Library items are catalogued at: <http://rgssa.slimlib.com.au:81>
Or: through Libraries Australia <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

OFFICE HOURS

Thursdays of each week from 10.00am to 1.00pm Tel: (08) 7424 6311
(Thursday lecture nights 10am to 4pm) Website: <https://www.rgssa.org.au/>

Deadline for the Feb/March issue of *GeoNews* is 1st March 2025

Editor's email address for contributions is: margiedaw8@gmail.com

Front Cover: Gwion Gwion figure: Photo credit Nigel Kerby

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Royal Geographical Society of South Australia Inc

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✉ ADMIN@RGSSA.ORG.AU

LIBRARY
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and Mr Rod Buntin

FELLOWS

Dr Sue Barker, Brian Ward, Rod Shearing OAM, Colin Harris PSM and Dr Peter Smailes

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Vice President/s	Dr Julia Short, Professor Guy Robinson
Director	Emeritus Professor Iain Hay
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Library:	Nona Verco
Administration:	Leigh Radford OAM
Program:	Frances Gnodtke
Research Publications & Awards:	Professor Guy Robinson
Engagement & Communications:	Dr Julia Short
Education	Rob Shepherd

OTHER PROGRAMS

Library staff:	Nona Verco, Rosemary Hocking, Geoff Lemmey, Phyl Twigg, Gail Ward, John Sloan, Janet Grant, Joyce Garlick, Kate Buckley and Bev Nester.
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Map Digitalisation, Cataloguing & Relics:	Roger Irvine, Andrew Davies, Richard Barnes, George & Liz Willanski, Dymphna Cudmore, Peter Becker
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SA Geographical Journal Editors	Dr Gerti Szili, Dr Gareth Butler and Dr George Tan
Meeting Hospitality:	Sally Hanley
Rare Books Group Convenor:	Dr Jill Kerby, assisted by Sally Hanley & Nona Verco
Book Conservation:	Frances Gnodtke
Volunteer Coordinator:	Ingrid Ahmer
Treasures Project:	Hugh Orr

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The new year brims with optimism for our Society, as we look to celebrate 140 years, and realise some other major milestones.

The first of those is the physical transformation of our Library, with the construction of grand new bookcases and a complete reorganisation of the space. As I write in early January, some unexpected structural issues have emerged with the project – some might say not to be unexpected with old buildings. Hopefully by the time you read this, matters will be resolved and the construction complete. Originally, we had hoped to be able to reopen for business by the end of January, however the State Library is closing the Mortlock wing to the public for February and March to allow for some refurbishment. That effectively takes pressure off our own works and gives some latitude for our contractors. We hope to have the project complete in February. It should be noted that while we're closed to the public for a full four months because of the concurrent works, access for RGSSA Members can be arranged by appointment, once our refurbishment is complete. It is our expectation to have an official reopening function and dedication of the new bookcases in April. As I've been saying for some time, this is an exciting and meaningful transformation of our Library and one which promises much for members and for the public. It will be a more open space and one which will allow us to better showcase our treasures and mount exhibitions.

While all this is happening, our many committees are actively working on various projects, and we're looking forward to holding our annual Awards at Government House in late May. After the successful launch of our Library Research Fellowship program in 2024, this year we're looking to host three visiting Fellows, who will be using our unique collection to further their own research projects. Several trips for Members are in the offing for the year and another impressive lecture series is being finalised. Our South Australian Geographic Journal is being relaunched; several books are being developed, as well as the new series 'Antipodean Perspectives on Geography'.

If that's not enough, behind the scenes other transformative work is underway. Growth of our Society depends on sound finances and the

capacity to attract new sources of income. Council has engaged the services of marketing company Nation Creative, who have worked with many organisations – from Rotary, to the Sydney Opera House, the State Library of SA and others. Their expertise will help us to better tell our own unique story and to create new opportunities. Additionally, our new Investment Committee is developing an investment strategy to fund RGSSA activities and aspirations for the long term. Under the leadership of Treasurer Tony Merchant, the committee is working to build a sustainable funding model for the long term. It's a 100 year vision for RGSSA, which builds on the successes of the past, by creating new possibilities and growth for the future.

These are exciting times for our Society and there will be more news to share as 2025 progresses.

Leigh Radford OAM, President

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to *GeoNews* for 2025 and a very Happy New Year to all our members.

As mentioned elsewhere in this edition, due to renovations of RGSSA Library and Mortlock Wing, there will be interruptions to office access, our library and the Mortlock Wing. Consequently, some previously planned RGSSA sessions have been deferred. Please see rear pages for the current time table.

It is anticipated that Geo@12 meetings will commence in May. Further details will be in our February/March edition of *GeoNews*.

Should anyone be interested in volunteering their services, our Volunteer Coordinator Ingrid Ahmer, can be contacted at:
volunteers@rgssa.org.au

Members who were able to attend our Christmas dinner thoroughly enjoyed the presentation from our guest speaker, Ian Doyle OAM. For those who were unable to attend, the Quiz challenge is in this edition and answers will be provided in our February/March *GeoNews*. Special

mention of thanks and gratitude to Professor Colin Harris OAM who for many years has been our Quiz Master. After decades of dedication in composing and presenting the Annual Christmas Dinner Quiz, Colin retired from the role last year. He did however mention that he enjoyed being a participant in our 2024 Quiz.

As ever, please feel free to submit or suggest articles you think may be of interest to our membership. Meanwhile, enjoy reading...

Margie Dawson, Editor.

NEW MEMBERS

We have much pleasure in extending a warm and cordial welcome to the following new members and trust that they will enjoy a long and rewarding association with the Society.

Wayne Williamson	Lina Nilsson Boendergaard	Jared Leo
Dianna Payne and Sean Flaherty	Yan Liang	John Brimacombe
Kahlia Clarke	<i>Rejoining:</i> Roderick Eime	Virginie Ducruc

RGSSA JANUARY 2025 OFFICE CLOSURE

It is anticipated that the office will reopen at 10am on Thursday 16th January 2025. However, as the Mortlock Library will be closed from 27th January until 1st April for flooring refurbishments, it may be difficult for members to access the Office during February and March. Members will be kept up to date about access to the Office via periodic emails and via updates on the Contacts page of the website - [Contact - The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia](https://rgssa.org.au/contact) (<https://rgssa.org.au/contact>)

During the closure period, the admin@rgssa.org.au email account will be monitored periodically and any urgent matters dealt with. The Office telephone will not be monitored during this period.

Melissa Gibbs, Secretary

JOHN McDOUALL STUART'S TABLE

During the course of shifting furniture around for the refurbishment for the Society's library Justin Gare, senior objects conservator Artlab, commented that the red gum table (with drawer - pictured) made by Stuart was of

exceptional quality considering it was made at Green Patch Station, Eyre Peninsula in the 1850s. At that time the tools available for the table's construction would have been fairly primitive.



Justin says, "... as far as I can tell there is no evidence suggesting that it wasn't made by JMS. The more I think

about it makes a lot of sense if he did make it, and that he made it earlier. This would explain why the piece looks like it's made by a talented amateur rather than a professional cabinetmaker. It has numerous eccentricities which make for a very interesting piece.

The main evidence of an earlier manufacture is the pre-1836 screw type that is used to hold the top on the table. They are a partly handmade screw, with hand filed head and hand cut slot, that is very rarely seen in furniture after the late 1830's, as more efficient and cheaper methods of mechanised and mass-produced manufacture of wood screws were adopted in 1836. Secondly the use of red gum as a furniture timber is uncommon, particularly for entire pieces of furniture, and is generally restricted to the early period of Adelaide up to about the mid-1840s.

Of course, there is the reminiscence of James Sinclair in 1909 (the Greenpatch station leaseholder), where he recounts: "Mr. Sinclair is

sitting at a table made by the Explorer in 1852. The material was picked by Stuart from a heap at an old sawmill pit and carried with the help of his pupils about five miles to the Station. He had but few tools, and Donald [Sinclair] walked six miles to get a screwdriver. The ends of the drawer knobs were made of mother of pearl taken from an old accordion".¹

Justin adds that: "this was 57 years later when James was about 70. He may have melded two stories into one. There is no doubt he made numerous pieces of furniture at Green Patch but descriptions of the rudimentary living conditions at Green Patch and the fact that he didn't even have a screwdriver suggests to me that it would be most unlikely that the table was made there. The [Stuart's] leather thong chair (pictured) and the description of [another item], the sheoak framed couch upholstered in canvas and stuffed with sheep's wool, paint a picture more of inventive bush craft quality furniture than what we see in the quality of the table. This bush craft quality aligns much better with the Green Patch living conditions than the conditions required to make the table.



I also spoke with the History Trust regarding the possibility of a grant for the investigation into the piece and I was given the impression an application would be welcome. It's given me great pleasure looking at this piece of furniture. Hopefully, with RGSSA's permission, I would like to publish an article on the piece. It would be good to elevate the status of this object.

Regards,
Justin Gare
Senior Objects Conservator
December 2024"

As this story unfolds, we will keep the membership informed.

¹ *Adelaide Observer* 31/7/1909

Meanwhile, from Justin, some more interesting reminisces of James Sinclair who was about 11 or 12 when JMDS was at Green Patch. They paint a picture of a very spartan rugged life, not much more than glorified camping, but it doesn't sound like the life conducive to making fine furniture.

"Stuart and I (James Sinclair) were generally given the 'strong mob' to mind, and we got on splendidly together. As he was very fond of reading most of the 'minding' fell upon me. He also did hut building, carpentering, bullock driving, lamb-marking, hut keeping, wool rolling and pressing, and the overlooking of the shearing. He wood-blocked the floors of the Uley old homestead. As window glass was not plentiful Stuart felmongered sheepskins, and tacked them on frames made to fit the window openings. – These acted well in winter, but in hot weather they tightened and burst with a report like the crack of a pistol. We have camped under a bullock dray in 'watch boxes' made of split palings— very comfortable in winter, but warm in summer."²

Rod Shearing OAM

PS: We have won a grant from the History Trust of S.A. to repair Stuart's chair and provide a special display space in our new library. Art Lab will begin work in February 2025.

² *The Register 23 July 1910, page 6.*

EAT THE INVADERS

Australia's unique biodiversity...

Production for new television program **Eat the Invaders**, hosted by **Tony Armstrong** and premiering on **ABC TV & iview** on **7 January 2025 at 8:30pm**, used the **RGSSA** for a portion of filming in April 2024. Tony Armstrong sat down with Professor Philip Hayward from the University of British Columbia to discuss the potential of starting a **CANE TOAD** industry with scientific testing and backing to make it safe for human consumption.

The **CANE TOAD** episode will be available on **iview** from 7 Jan 8:30pm, and will premiere on **ABC TV** on **21 Jan, 8:30pm**.



FILMING IN RGSSA ROOMS: PROFESSOR PHILIP HAYWARD FROM UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA WITH TONY ARMSTRONG HOST OF EAT THE INVADERS

The show sheds light on Australia's unique biodiversity that is being attacked and overrun by the invasive plants and animals brought here by our colonial ancestors. Pests like Cane Toads, Camels, Carp, Deer, Rabbits and Cats have driven many of our native plants and animals to the brink of extinction. But what if a radical rethink could help turn this problem into an opportunity?



Over six episodes, host Tony Armstrong – with the help of scientists, land carers and an artist and a chef – will attempt to turn our unwanted ecological trash into desirable culinary gold, in a provocative attempt to **Eat the Invaders**.

Further explore this unique initiative by either streaming @abciview, or clicking on the links below.

Margie Dawson, Editor

Stream: *Eat the Invaders* from Tuesday 7 January 8:30pm on @abciview and ABC TV #EatTheInvadersTV

https://www.instagram.com/p/DCz2_knTUOY/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bRmFT-HyRs>

<https://www.facebook.com/ABCiview/videos/591249330062733>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@abciview/video/7441060506749652231>

DONATION OF JOHN BILLIATT *signed papers*

In November 2024, the Society received a donation of two Parliamentary Papers from the family of John Billiatt, who was the youngest member of the John McDouall Stuart expedition that successfully conquered the continent of Australia in 1861 - 1862.

On the 1862 paper is the signature of John Billiatt. *The 1861 paper is significant, as we have John McDouall Stuart's original diary of this expedition in our collection.*



**PRESIDENT LEIGH RADFORD OAM AND
ANNABEL PRICE IN THE ROOMS NOV 2024**

We are very grateful to Annabel Price for this donation. Annabel is the god daughter of one of the descendants of John Billiatt, the late Shirley Cameron-Wilson.

These papers, published by the South Australian government at the time, are a comprehensive record of these important expeditions, which were the genesis of the route for Australia's Overland Telegraph project around 10 years later, one of the world's greatest engineering and telegraphic projects at the time.

Rod Shearing OAM

SUMMARY OF RECENT LECTURES

Wednesday 23 October 2024

From sextants to satellites: where on earth am I?

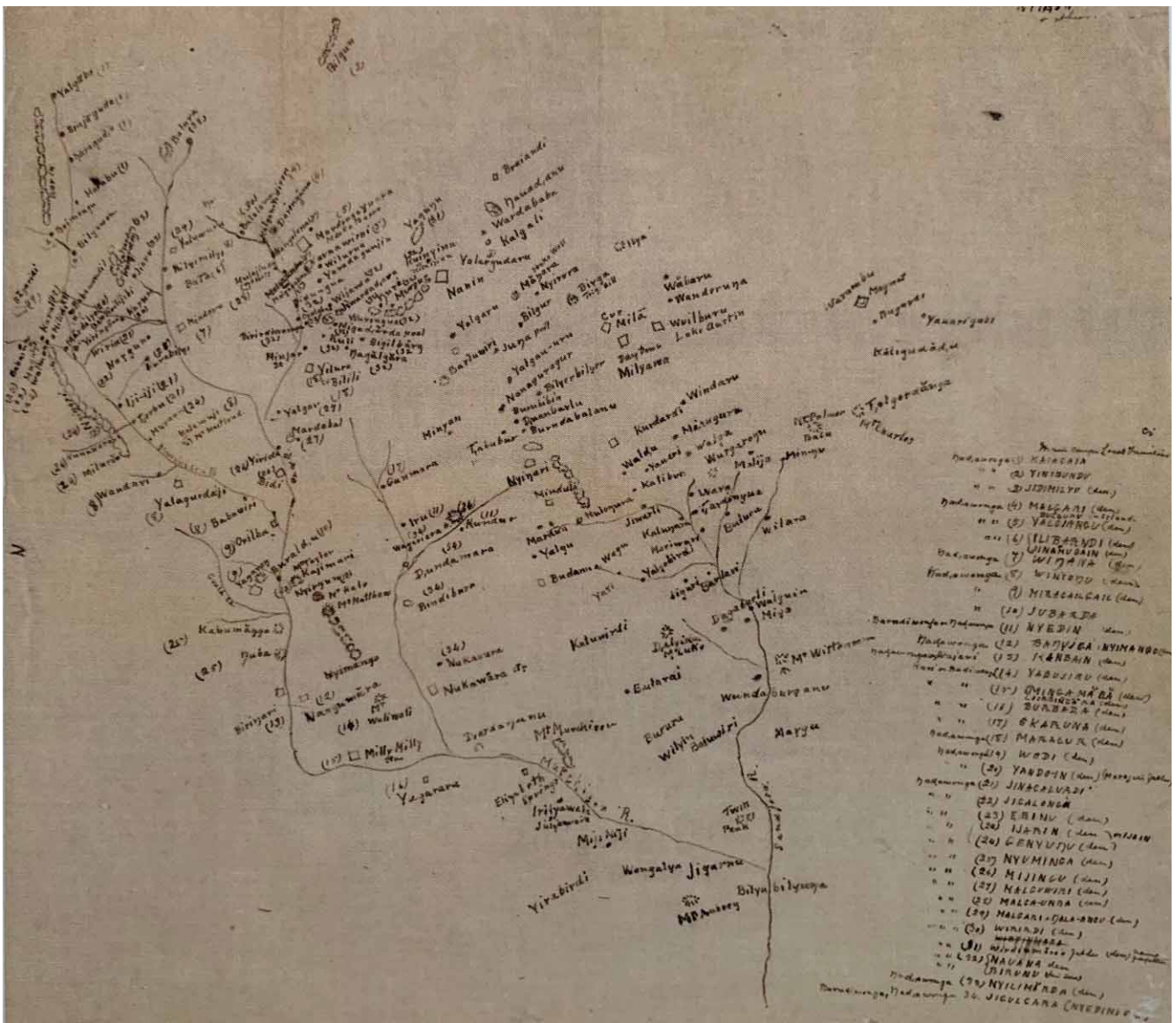
Chris Rawlinson

Our October speaker, Chris Rawlinson, a spatial information specialist, started out as a geographer and ended up being an expert on geodesy, the science of understanding the geometry and spatial orientation of the Earth.

He delivered a well-illustrated lecture on the subject, tracing the development of instruments such as telescopes, clocks, sextants and theodolites, all involved in determining locations on the earth's surface, both on land and at sea. He talked about understanding the shape of the earth, and its position with respect to the sun, planets and stars developed from ancient times to the present.

While working in the Murchison River area of Western Australia in 1910-11, Daisy Bates asked local Aboriginal people to draw a map of the area. They drew the pattern of the river and its tributaries with numerous site locations and Bates then added place names as instructed by them.

The list on the right of the map contains the names of 34 families or individuals related to the numbered locations. Their languages were also listed. This was among the earliest ethnographic maps created anywhere in Australia.



Source: National Library exhibition, 2014, Mapping our world: Terra Incognita to Australia
Murchison River map

Eratosthenes, a Greek mathematician based at Alexandria around 200BC, calculated the size of the Earth by placing stakes in the ground 5000 stadia (about 900km) apart and recording the angle of the sun at noon on midsummer day, achieving an estimate with about a 4% error.

Ptolemy, another mathematician based at Alexandria in about 110AD used the Canary Islands as 0° longitude and calculated the longitudes and latitudes for 8000 places in the known world, stretching out as far as China. No map made by Ptolemy has survived but in the 15th century, a world map was reconstituted based on the locations he recorded.



Source: Wikipedia

Map of the world based on Ptolemy's work



Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Division

Al-Idrisi's map of 1154. Originally drawn with south at the top

Al-Khwarizmi was a Persian polymath in the 9th century who developed algebra and his name became the basis of the English word algorithm.

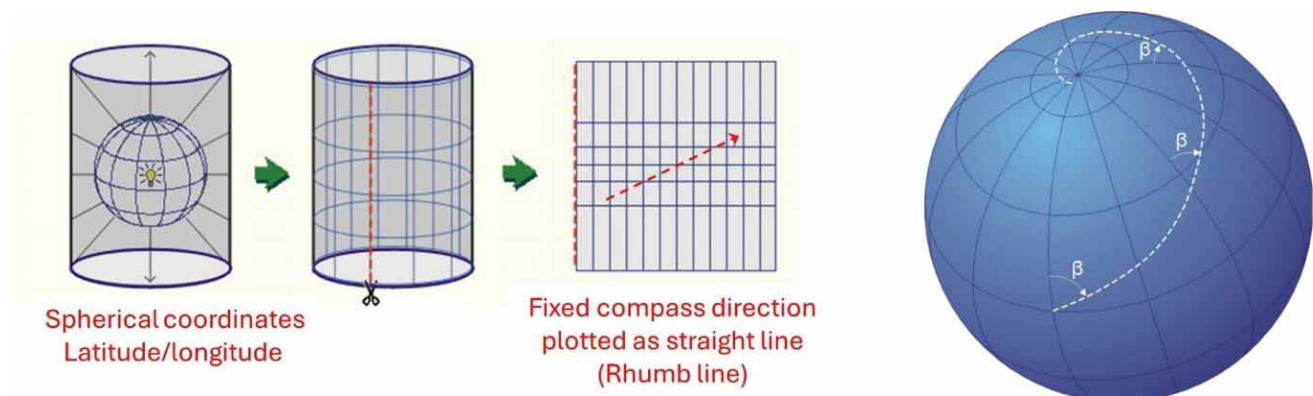
The surge for exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries accelerated the development of instruments to measure the location of ships at sea and

explorers on land. The open sea has no landmarks for guidance and navigators had to rely on the stars as well as the sun, winds, currents, ocean swells, waves and the presence of birds. The navigators knew when stars would rise and their direction but needed clear skies to view them.

While latitude could be measured by the angle to the North star, longitude could not be measured accurately. Throwing a rope off the stern of a ship and counting the number of knots that rolled out in a certain space of time gave the speed in knots. Knowing the direction of the ship allowed the navigator to calculate how far east or west it had travelled. However, it provided only a rough estimate.

Copernicus in 1543 proved that the Earth was not the centre of the cosmos and proposed the heliocentric model of a spherical Earth which Galileo confirmed in 1633. For his troubles in going against Church orthodoxy, Galileo was confined to house arrest for the rest of his life.

Being a sphere it is impossible to project the Earth onto a flat map without distorting parts of it. Mercator placed a light inside a sphere and projected the longitudes and latitudes onto a surrounding cylinder. Laying out the cylinder flat produced Mercator's projection. Although this greatly enlarges the polar regions - Greenland is shown as larger than Africa which is actually 14 times larger than Greenland - the projection allowed fixed compass directions to be plotted as a straight line, a Rhumb line.



Source: Chris Rawlinson

Derivation of Mercator's projection

The problem of measuring longitudes, particularly at sea became acute, with major ship wrecks and the loss of 2000 British sailors in 1707. This spurred the quest for an accurate clock that could be used at sea, where

pendulum clocks were of no use. A £20,000 prize (=A\$7.7 million today) was offered to measure longitude to half a degree or 55 kms.

The Astronomer Royal wanted to use the angular distance between individual stars and the moon recorded in the Nautical Almanac. The difference between local time and Greenwich time (and hence longitude difference) could then be calculated. This however needed clear skies, accurate measures of angles, and complex calculations.

John Harrison, originally a carpenter who built wooden clocks, developed a marine clock and presented his first effort in 1735. He further refined the clock over four versions, achieved a time error of less than 3 seconds per day and solved the longitude problem.

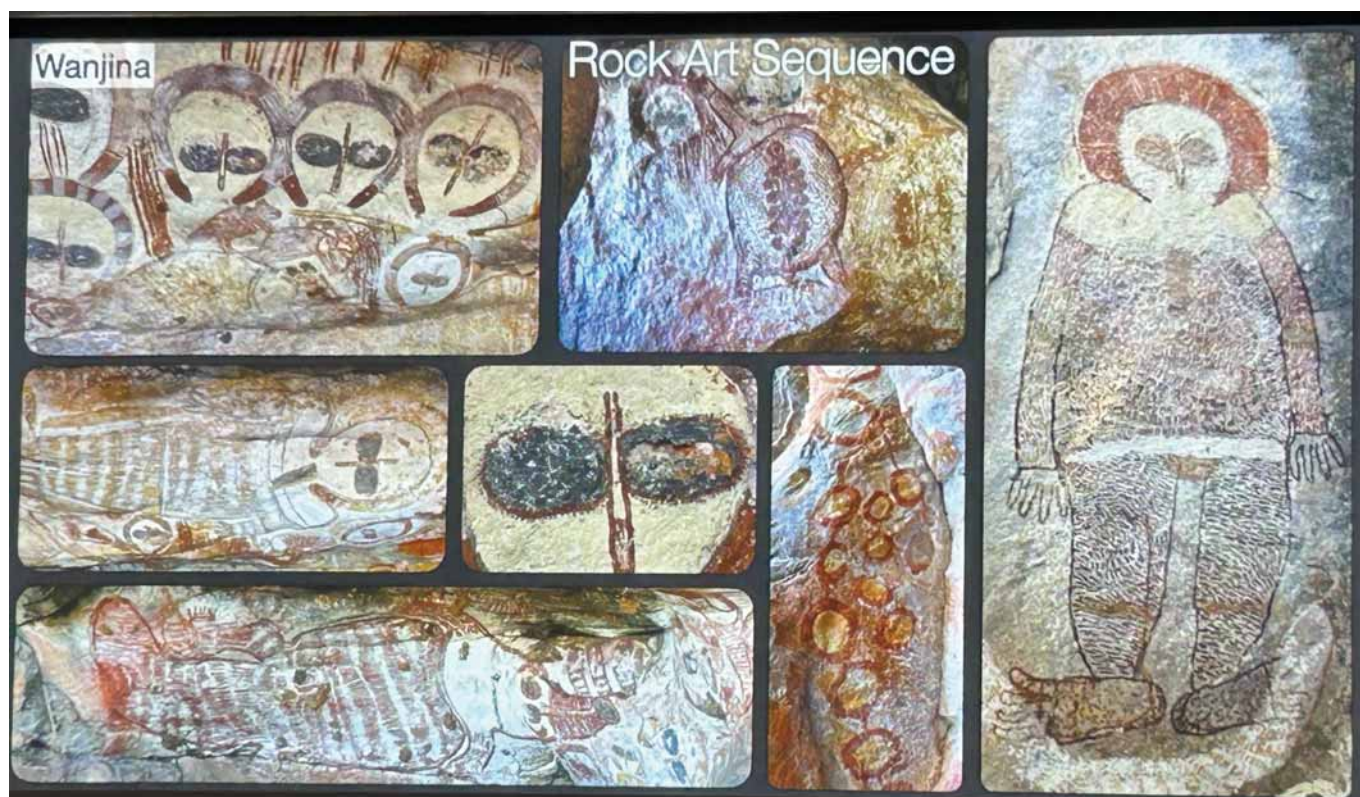
Geodesy is the science of precisely measuring the shape, size and gravity field of the Earth over time. Geodetic triangulation networks of precisely measured fixed points as the basis for accurate maps were established from the late 18th century onwards. Geodetic theodolites were developed which were capable of the highly precise angle measurements required in these triangulation networks. Ramsden's Great Theodolite of 1787 for example, could measure an angle accurate to 1" of arc, equivalent to 10 cm over 130 km. The British took 70 years from 1810 to complete the triangulation of India. In 1868, George Goyder took two months to measure a single 12.4 km baseline for his mapping of South Australia. Australia completed its first geodetic triangulation of the country in 1966.

Today, the Global Positioning System (GPS) is delivered by about 30 satellites that orbit the earth at 20,000 km altitude. Each satellite transmits their precise location every 6 seconds and smart phones can derive their latitude and longitude from these signals. This system is based on a range of internationally agreed standards and precise time measurement using atomic clocks in the satellites and the mobile phone network which continually update the quartz clocks in your smart phone.

Overall, this was an excellent, informative and most interesting lecture by Chris. The many questions that followed were evidence of the stimulation he had provided to the audience.

Andrew Lothian

Thursday 14 November 2024
Rock Art Australia
Professor Andy Gleadow AO FAA
and Ian Waina



3

Joc Schmiechen introduced two lecturers who reported on different aspects of rock art in Australia with particular reference to Balanggara country in the remote East Kimberley.

Ongoing research for over ten years involving the Kwini people, archaeologists and environmental scientists aims to establish how long ago the Old People visited and created the art.

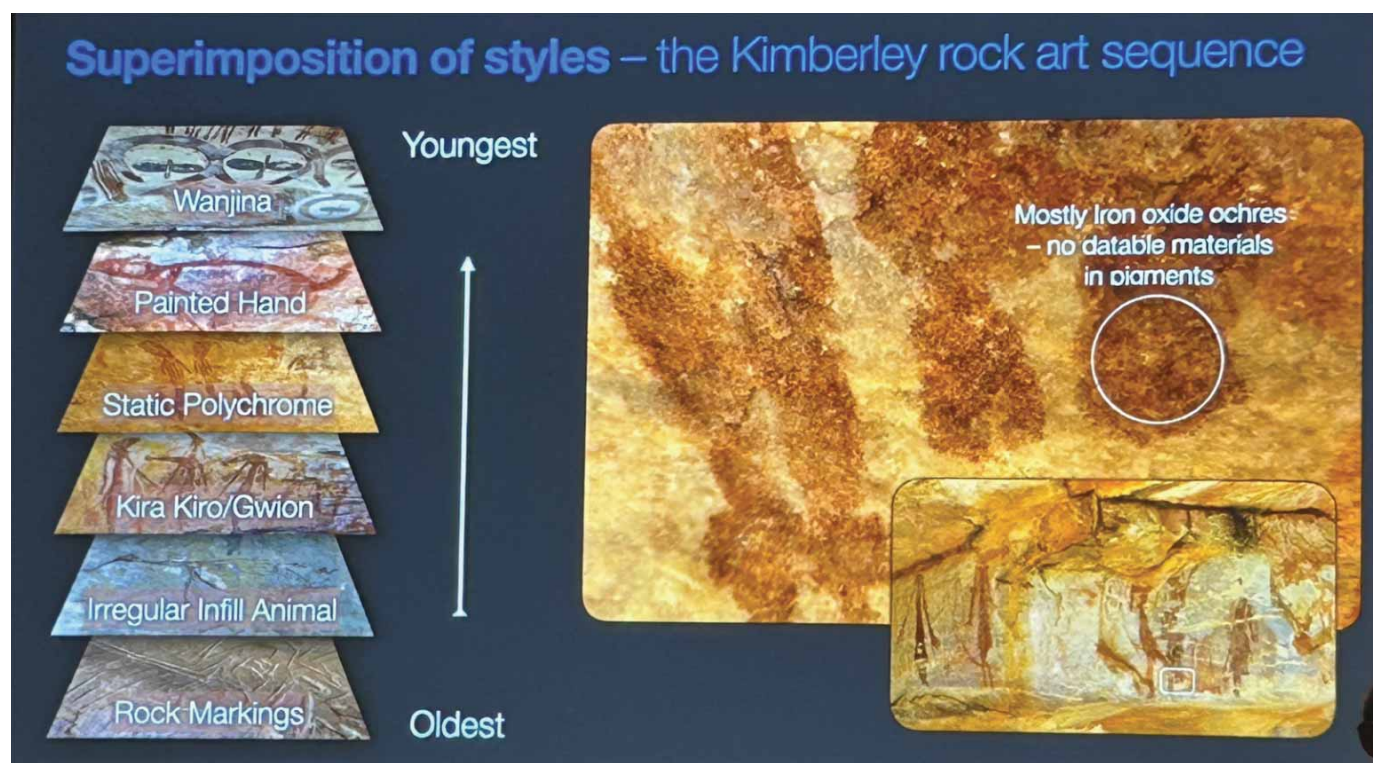
Acquainted for many years with the difficult terrain, Ian Waina spoke on behalf of his Kwini people on the rock art created by his ancestors over a period of 20,000 years. His community, with a population of c. 500, is familiar with the art which includes a painting of a Tasmanian tiger, approximately 10,000 years old. Also depicted are salt water turtles which are still eaten today. To Ian's people the paintings are not just art but a depiction of the life of his people. His family totem is the kangaroo.

³ All photos courtesy of Professor Andy Gleadow

Art spreads news and law, and plays a role in the transition from boys to men in country from sea to the desert.

From a family of seven children with 4 sisters and 2 brothers, Ian described traditional hunting by his father on land and sea. Stories were shared with scientists from the Western Australian Museum, including Ian Crawford. Our Kwini lecturer described art in his first backyard as “the oldest library in Australia” and considers it a duty to protect it by keeping it safe. The book *Two ways to see: a rock art research journey* (available online from WA Museum) describes the dating of the rock art via the efforts of the Kwini people, together with the scientific community.

Andy Gleadow is a noted scientist and retired professor from University of Melbourne, with a ten-year collaboration in Kimberley research. An expert on fission track and other thermo-chronological dating methods, he leads the scientific dating project of the Kimberley rock art - the oldest library in Australia, indeed the world. His slides depicted many aspects to consider.



Ochre-based pigments cannot be dated but charcoal examples sometimes can for rocks which are 1.8 billion years old. The research team has now grown to include 20+ members.

Over time a natural decay process ensues with formation, development and subsequent collapse.

There is a sequence to rock painting styles in the Kimberley, also in Arnhem Land. Depiction of the anatomy of animals and plants is correct but human figures are seldom drawn.

Degradation and water damage occurs in some cases. Younger paintings are on top of earlier examples. Earlier animals are depicted in the paintings of the Kira Kira and Gwion Gwion examples. "Exquisite accuracy" was a description used. Superimposition of styles from the oldest to younger, irregular infill and static polychrome were features of some slides.

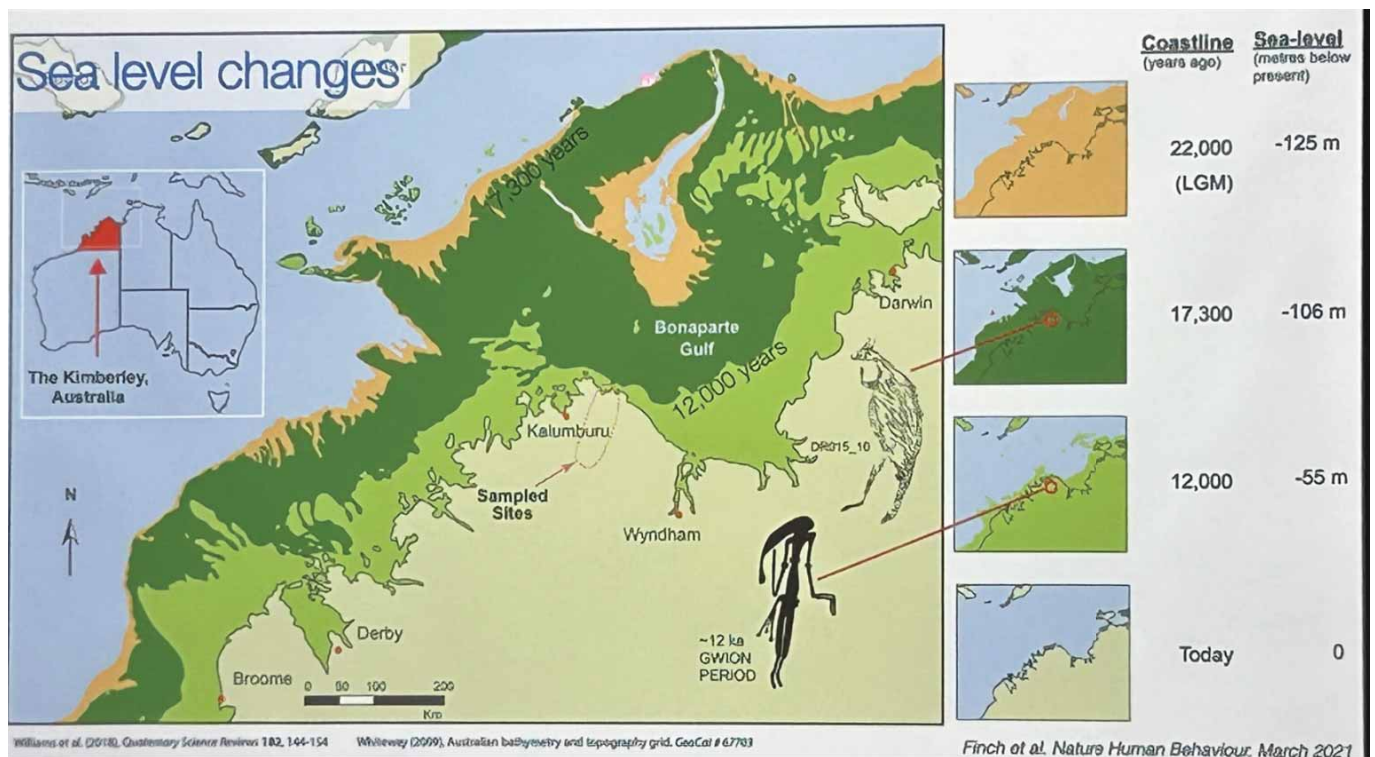
Organisms and micro-organisms have effects. Wasps make deposits on the art.

Megafauna (eg wombats) are sometimes depicted. The age of the painting can vary from 40,000 years ago, yet some have been created within living memory. Thylacines, now believed extinct, were present in the area 4,000-7,000 years ago. In the Drysdale River National Park radiocarbon dating of mud wasp nests gives an indication of the age of the art.

Mostly pigments cannot be dated correctly. Superpositions and superimpositions occur in the Pundawar Manbur rock shelter. Some rock shelters are in imminent danger of collapse, some more so than others. Most are able to survive 10,000 years. The developmental sequence of rock shelters limits its life. Andy mentioned the publication output of his colleague Helen Green, especially on laminations in mineral accretions.

Depiction of head-dresses in ceremonies is a clue to the age of the painting.

Sea level changes have occurred. During the Ice Age because of the ice cap, sea level was 125 metres lower than at present.



Andy considers it most important to protect the art and keep it safe. Pigments fade; therefore, it is important to record the art. Fire and animals rubbing against art plus human vandalism are all capable of causing harm.

Home to Flinders University, Andy indicated here in Adelaide we have relevant scientists in our backyard.

Time constraints limited questions on this fascinating topic.

Valerie Balagengadaran

GEO@12

LUNCHTIME LECTURE

Wednesday 7 November 2024

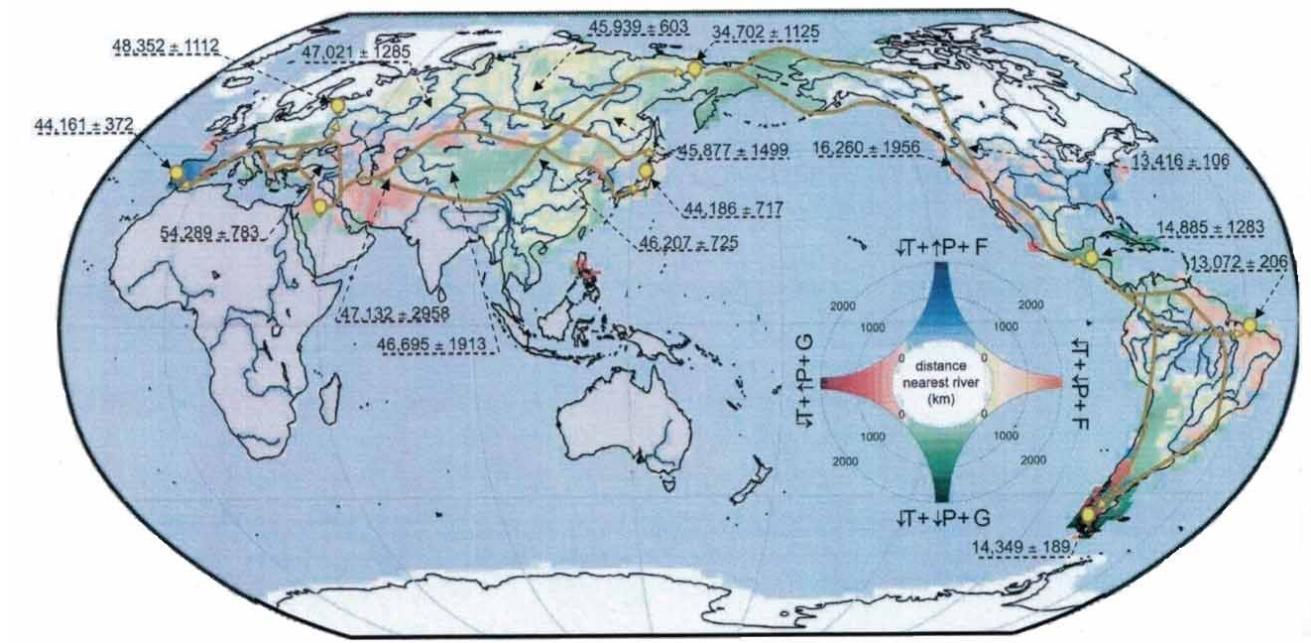
How the ancestors of indigenous Australians settled and thrived since their beginning

Professor Corey Bradshaw

Matthew Flinders Professor of Global Ecology, Flinders University

Prof Bradshaw's presentation was the culmination of 10 year's work in tracing the movement of early people into Australia. He is a mathematical ecologist who uses models to simulate natural systems and the impact of pressures on them. His models reconstruct what the world looked like in the past. He agrees with George Box who said, "All models are wrong, some are useful." A model simplifies the truth.

Together with colleagues, Prof Bradshaw produced a map of human migration pathways out of Africa through Asia and the Americas.



Source: Saltr  et al, 2024, *Nature Communications*, 15:4364
Environmental Shifts and human migration pathways

However, the "gaping hole" in this was south-east Asia and India. With sea levels 120 metres lower than today, Australia was part of Sahul, the name of the enlarged Australia which extended north into eastern Indonesia and included Papua New Guinea.

Prof Bradshaw's modelling showed two routes into Australia, one through the Kimberly Shelf, an extensive area of land extending out from the present Kimberleys, and the second via PNG. He showed that in order to survive, 1000 people needed to make the voyage with an additional 100 people every decade or so. There is a congruence between the modelled predictions and the archaeological evidence. There could have been 50,000 people living on the Kimberly Shelf prior to the sea level rising after the last Ice Age.

The wetter the area, the fewer people had to move. The size of their territory related to the wetness. The distance to water was a critical factor. Mountains had little impact on the movement of people, reducing the probability by only 1%.

Prof Bradshaw then showed the "super highways" of the Sahul that existed 50,000 years ago and remarked how similar these are to the routes taken by the early European explorers and to the present-day road system.



Source: Crabtree et al, 2021. Landscape rules predict optimal super-highways for the first peopling of Sahul. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5.10: 1303-1313.
Superhighways of Sahul at >50,000 years

Prof Bradshaw estimated that prior to European settlement, the indigenous population was 2.5 million. However, with the impact of smallpox and other diseases together with “active genocide”, their numbers plummeted by up to 1.5 million. Over the millennia of their habitation, they needed to be innovative, resourceful and have foresight in order to survive. They did not just survive but thrived in Australia.

Andrew Lothian

RARE BOOKS GROUP

28th November 2024

Discoveries from the Manuscript Drawer Burke & Wills

November's session was researched and delivered by Kate Buckley, a volunteer who is transcribing the manuscript collection of the Society to eventually enable the information to be easily read in the future.

Kate's cue for this talk was inter alia the following information set from the manuscript's list:-

26 BURKE, Robert O'Hara

Letters of recommendation 1852.20pp. various sizes. (MS. 15c)

Five letters including letter 28 Oct. 1852 J. S. Pakington, Colonial Office, Downing Street London, to C.J. La Trobe endorsed on p.4 with names of persons recommending Burke endorsement dated April 1853.

Kate began by taking us down the path of Robert O'Hara Burke's early years - his background in Ireland and in Europe. He seemed to have the patronage of Lord Cloncurry an Irish peer and wool merchant. We heard that Burke resigned from the army rather than be court martialled.

Kate also referenced the intercolonial rivalry that ensued during the 1850s and 1860's, particularly between South Australia and Victoria in the race to the top end of Australia.

Researching Burke's offering to the Victorian Colonial Government at that time, Kate unearthed Burke's lack of experience and stamina, his poor judgement and inter-personal relationship skills. Kate

demonstrated how he drove his men to frustration with his confrontational or ambiguous instructions.

He caused his scientists to depart enroute, many experienced bushmen to leave, or he sacked them.

Kate added that there were many better explorers in Australia in the 1840s and 1850s: Eyre, Sturt, Gregory and McDouall Stuart. The Victorian Government who financed the expedition could have had their pick.

We know now that poor timing and serendipitous events were the ultimate undoing of the expedition. Kate pointed out that Burke's instructions to jettison the lime juice, a known scorbatic, no doubt contributed to the death of expedition members. Kate posed questions about the deaths of Burke and Wills.



Involved in the setting of scientific goals for the expedition were several educated Germans; with two participating in the exploration. Kate exposed the writings of one of the participants which has been uncovered in Germany. (This could be a good scholarship challenge).

On his return, King, the sole close expedition survivor, was instructed by the selection committee, the Royal Society of Victoria, not to talk about the expedition and afterwards, was sent overseas for several years.

Who would put a non-experienced bushman in charge of 19 men, to undertake a 4,000km cross country expedition through untraversed country?

Of the items purchased and taken on this expedition, there was neither “leadership” nor “oversight”.

A large amount of inappropriate equipment was gathered.

Sourced from the manuscript collection records, Kate’s talk was an excellent forensic analysis of the event. Over 30 attendees were spell bound as the talk unfolded.

If there is membership interest, we may be able to have Kate’s talk put into print for a subsequent issue of *GeoNews*.

This Society has a relic from Howitt’s search. (Alfred William Howitt was appointed leader of the Burke & Wills’ relief expeditions and who successfully found and brought back the survivor, King.⁴

Rod Shearing OAM

UPCOMING LECTURES

Thursday 20 February 2025
Update on Timor Leste 5 years on
Professor Udoy Saikia

An update on the lecture presented in September, 2020: ‘Youth & Well Being in Timor Leste: Opportunities & Challenges for the Nation Building Process’.

⁴ http://www.burkeandwills.net.au/Explorers/Relief_Parties/howitt.htm



Due to renovations, further details on above lecture to be advised via email

Thursday 27 March 2025
 French Exploration in South Australia
 Danielle Clode

Danielle Clode is an interdisciplinary scholar and author of 13 books broadly on environmental history, ranging from bushfires to Australian fossils. As a consultant researcher she has also published widely in academic journals across health, history, psychology and biology. With a BA in psychology from Adelaide University and a PhD in conservation biology from Oxford, she is now an adjunct Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Flinders University. Danielle's work on French scientific exploration in the 18th and 19th century stemmed from her interest in the history of Australian biology, her own French family history and her upbringing on a boat. Her award-winning work on this topic includes, *Voyages to the South Seas*, *In Search of the Woman who*

Sailed the World, and a bilingual documentary which screened nationally on SBS TV.

French exploration of Australia has left an intriguing legacy of place names around the Australian coast, from Sydney to Tasmania, and across to Western Australia. In South Australia, the way we recall the encounter between Baudin and Flinders provides an interesting reflection on how French/English competition drove 18th century exploration and colonisation. Could Australia ever have been French? For this talk, Danielle will narrate a richly illustrated documentary film exploring the role French exploration played in Australia's colonial history, and particularly their drive for new knowledge and discovery, their distinctive appreciation for and interest in Indigenous culture and people and the substantial legacy of early biological and anthropological research.

Danielle will also bring a selection of books available for sale and signing.

Frances Gnodtke, Chair, Program Committee

Field Geology Club Provisional Program 2025

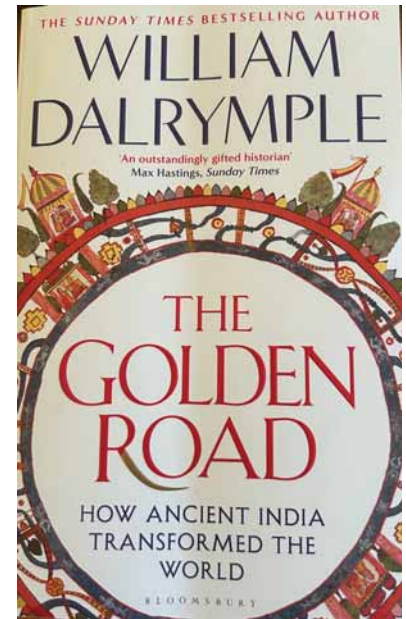
DATE	ACTIVITY	TOPIC/THEME	SPEAKER/LEADER
6 Feb	Meeting	Callabonna Museum collecting 2024	Tom & Sharon Hurley
23 Feb	½ day excursion	Beginners' & guests' day at Henley Beach	Laurence Campbell
6 Mar	Meeting	The Anthropocene in the context of geological time	Associate Professor Kathryn Amos

Further information: www.fieldgeologyclubsa.org.au or email: frances.williams@adelaide.edu.au

Book Review ~ The *Golden Road* by W Dalrymple, Bloomsbury Press 2024

This book brings together many of the very interesting accounts the Society has in its collections of the intriguing links between the world's European and Asian diasporas over the past 2,000 years. The book also provides a good reference for scholars of the Silk Road and the development of religions in Asia and the Far east.

Often, as the Society has researched information for its annual exhibitions, these links have surfaced. Queries as to why the religions of Sri Lanka and Cambodia have common threads, and why religion waxed and waned, long before the Christian missionaries. This book covers generally the period 250 BC to 1200 AD.



IN THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

This book highlights the contributions of geographers such as Strabo and Ptolemy, the historians Tacitus and naturalist and naval man Pliny the elder.

It highlights the effect significant rulers Alexander the Great, Ashoka Emperor of India, Wu Zetia, the first and only female of China, Augustus of Rome, how their exploits and trade shaped Asia and the East and became the cultural catalyst for understanding religious tolerance.

During this period, there was still turmoil, slavery, cities sacked and wars for supremacy. However, trade, mathematics, science, and religion underlaid these events, with trade dominating every time. Pepper was a standard condiment in ancient Roman recipes.

We learn how India exported Buddhism to China competing with Daoism and Confucianism. Discussed are concepts in art design styles and how these included Roman, Greek, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese motifs. Read how Buddha ended up with human form with a Greek/Roman hairstyle. Hear of the apostle St. Thomas, martyred in India and the after effects. Learn why Hinduism or Jainism became a favoured Indian religion under the Vedic mantras.

Further we read of the Nalanda Buddhist library located in Dharmaganga in India, which equaled the Byzantine library in Alexandria.

There are long explanations of the politics behind some of the rulers in India, China and the Arab Caliphs and the court intrigues which may interest many readers.

Traded items included silk, cotton, pepper, and cinnamon. Many Roman recipes of 400 AD included pepper as a condiment. Read about the many ports and shipping in the region.

In 773 we read about Baghdad, a city of half a million under the control of Caliph Mansur (714-75). When the Indian embassy arrived from the Raja of Sindh they observed there, Arab tribes, Persians, Turks, Africans, Armenians, Indians, Jews, Syrians, Slavs, and Byzantine Greeks. There were records of Indian astronomy and mathematics including the Indian concept of zero. Mathematics and astronomy were translated into Arabic.

The book shows how, by the power of concepts, ideas and culture, civilization can be transformed using trade as the catalyst. The author poses the question "could they do this again [today]?"

300 pp with notes and a comprehensive bibliography with maps and illustrations in colour.

Rod Shearing OAM

UPCOMING SESSIONS RARE BOOKS GROUP

Sessions are held in the Jervois Room, on the southern (North Terrace) end on the ground floor of the Mortlock Wing, on the fourth Thursday of the month, from 10.30am to 12 noon, unless otherwise indicated.

Bookings are essential via the Society's website <https://rgssa.org.au>

*Due to the closure of RGSSA Library and Mortlock Wing for renovations there will be no sessions of RBG during
FEBRUARY and MARCH 2025*

SURPRISES FROM THE LIBRARY

I am often surprised and amazed at what can be found hidden inside books held in our collection. As an example, we hold the 1892 book "Life of Christopher Columbus" by Clements R. Markham, an English geographer, explorer and writer. He was Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society from 1863-1888, and later served as the Society's President for a further 12 years. In the latter capacity he was mainly responsible for organising the British National Antarctic Expedition of 1901-1904, and for launching the polar career of Robert Falcon Scott.

A handwritten letter from Sir Clements R Markham to William Silver is inside our copy of the book:

*Palermo (Sicily)
21 April 1891*

*My dear Mr Silver,
Many thanks for your letter. I am much pleased that Nansen was selected for the medal, he had fairly won it. Mr Clintock had promised to stand by him.
It will give me great pleasure to see Mr Wilson-Barker when I return to England, which will be in early July.
Yours sincerely,
Clements R. Markham*

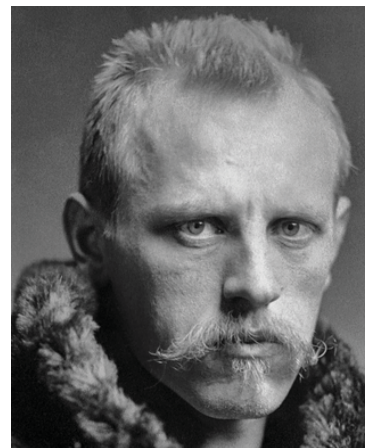


Sir Clements Markham
1830-1916

My paper on the old navigation instruments &c. is in the United Service Institution's Journal for March, I think.

Further research revealed that from its foundation, the Society received an annual grant of 50 guineas from the reigning monarch to be awarded with royal approval 'for the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery'. Initially the award was given in money, then from 1836-38 as a Royal Medal. In 1839, it was decided to divide the award and since then, the Society has awarded two medals: the Patron's Medal and the Founder's Medal. Both are of equal value and merit. The Royal Medals were originally made in fine gold (except during the years 1918-21 when they were made in bronze), but since 1975 they have been made in silver gilt.

Dr. Fridtjof Nansen was awarded the Patron's Medal in 1891 "For having been first to cross the inland ice of Greenland as well as for his qualities as a scientific geographer". In recognition of his work for refugees and the famine-stricken, the Nobel Committee in Christiania honoured Nansen with the 1922 Nobel Prize for Peace (the second Norwegian to gain this distinction). Typically, he donated the money to international relief efforts.



Fridtjof Nansen
1861-1930

It will be interesting to see what else is discovered as Gail Ward and I (volunteer cataloguers) work through the books in the Gallery to ensure they are listed on the online catalogue.

Rosemary Hocking, Library

AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR 2024

Premier's Certificates of Recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service

Nona Verco has been a volunteer with the RGSSA since 2014. Over the past decade, she has been a very active and valued member of our Library committee and currently chairs this group. Nona is one of the Society's dedicated Librarians and she opens and operates our library on Tuesdays. She has developed an amazing knowledge of the Library and is one of our most skilled and reliable



Librarians. If someone is searching for something, Nona invariably knows where to find it. She's also a committed member of our Rare Books Group and plays a leading role in scheduling events and sourcing material. She coordinates the efforts of our Volunteer Librarians and general Library volunteers. She is also a member of RGSSA's governing

Council. Nona is a dedicated and hard-working volunteer who is held in the highest esteem by her peers. She is a very worthy person to be recognised in the Premier's awards.

Phyl Twigg has been a volunteer with the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia since 2005, helping to look after the Society's extensive Library collection. As a former English teacher and librarian, she has brought invaluable experience in collection management and administration to her volunteering and she has provided invaluable service in maintaining the library. She deals with enquiries from members and the general public, including individuals based



overseas, and has helped to develop an improved catalogue of both the books and the Society's extensive collection of historical maps. The Society has relied heavily on her knowledge and input, and she is now one of the longest serving Librarians in the Society's 140-year history. Her years of valuable volunteer service to the Society fully merit recognition in the form of the Premier's Certificate.

Centenary Silver Medal

Nona Verco

Nona joined the Society in 1996. A qualified librarian, Nona first honed her skills in the Children's Library, which was a part of the State Library of South Australia services until the 1990s, and later studied for library qualifications as a mature age student at the University of Adelaide.

Nona has volunteered over and beyond a day a week in the Society's library since 2014 when she offered her services through a call for volunteers.

Nona understands that the Society's library, the largest geographical library in the southern hemisphere, is but a part of the bigger Australian resource for geography and is always on the lookout for how she can attract different users in to use the internationally significant collection. Her field of influence now extends to other cultural institutions in the

State and around Australia. During her overseas trips Nona has garnered information and ideas that that may enhance the Society's library and information services.

Recently, at the request of the Society's President, Nona agreed to assume an additional role as Chair of the Society's Library committee, following the sudden death of the incumbent. This role she has taken to with her usual good-natured enthusiasm and application. Nona has subsequently agreed to go onto the Society's Council, the supreme decision-making body of the Society, the library being by far the most valuable tangible asset the Society owns.

Nona comes with good credentials, her grandfather Langdon being an inaugural member and Society President, her uncle Lavington a councillor, and cousins Eric and Warren, members, the latter a councillor, and President.

Life Membership



Colin Harris for membership over 50 years of continuous membership of the RGSSA.



**MASTER OF CEREMONIES
DIRECTOR IAIN HAY**

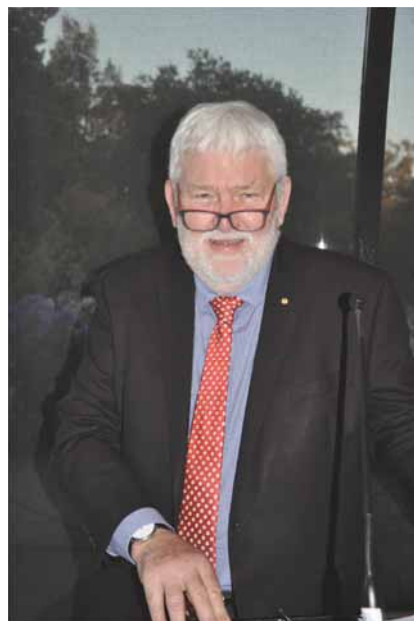


ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

HELD AT THE PAVILION ADELAIDE

Thursday 12th December 2024

Guest Speaker Ian Doyle OAM



Guest speaker at our annual dinner on 12/12/2024 was geographer by training, Ian Doyle, OAM, now retired after 31 years in rural media. President Leigh detailed Ian's passionate involvement, yet Ian modestly described his belief that he is not as talented and worthy as others believe.

After completing a degree in Economics and a Diploma of Education at the University of Queensland, Ian taught at Charters Towers. Radio and television journalism with the ABC followed with contributions to *Countrywide* and *Landline*. Much later in 1997, upon resigning as Channel 7 weather presenter, he set up Doyle Media Service and produced documentaries. A notable example was the 1999 *The Last Mail for Birdsville - the Story of Tom Kruse*. His OAM was presented to this rural media icon in 2021. He has been married to former television presenter, Jane Doyle for 44 years.

Our speaker told the story of the wooden vessel *Tacoma* built during 1944-1951 at Port Fairy. Funds were lent by the South Australian government after Thomas Playford recognised its potential on the advice of Frank Morehouse. As a result, three Haldane families revolutionised the state's fishing industry in the 1950s, from a previously untapped pelagic source offshore from Port Lincoln. The vessel returned to Port Fairy in March 2024.

Ian also spoke of Esmond Gerald "Tom" Kruse of the famed "*The Back of Beyond*", filmed in 1952 and released in 1954, when it was named best

film. It was based on the fortnightly mail delivery journey from Maree to Birdsville. Ian had met Tom in 1986 at Etadunna Station. On 22 February 1954 Sidney Nolan wrote a letter to Tom (whom he had first met in 1948) c/o Maree, which was the subject of a 2014 documentary.

Tom, whose funeral was held at the Morphettville racecourse in 2011 was buried at the Karlsruhe cemetery. Earlier he had been made an MBE.

Badger, the mail delivery vehicle, was retrieved by our speaker from the desert in 1986. Between 1996 and 1999, it was subsequently fully restored at Northfield by Tom and a group of enthusiasts led by Neil Weidenbach.

Speaker Ian Doyle was congratulated by RGSSA Director Iain Hay on a wonderful presentation.

Valerie Balagengadaran






A QUIZ of things geographical

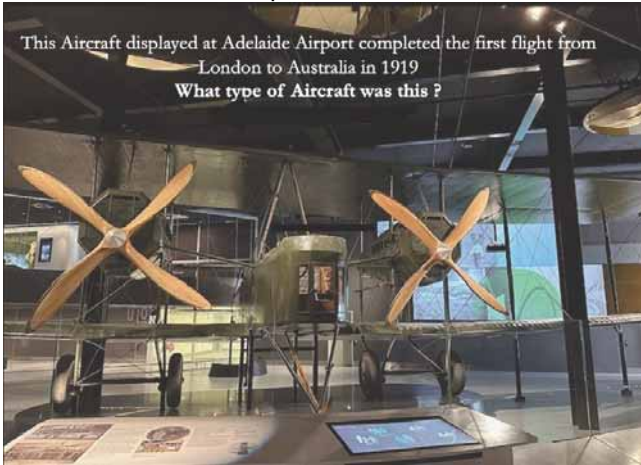
RGSSA CHRISTMAS DINNER QUIZ 2024



Recollections from *GeoNews* and General Geo

1 mark per question - **2 marks for question 7** Score: ____/21

1. How many editions of <i>GeoNews</i> per year? •	2. The first recipient of RGSSA Library Scholarship was? •
3. Which country has the most Government subsidised agriculture in the world? •	4. Answer the question on the slide: 
5. The February/March issue of <i>GeoNews</i> promoted an exhibition that was held at RGSSA during the History Month of May 2024 – name the title of the exhibition? •	6. How many time zones are there in Russia? (Circle your answer) • Five • Eleven • Seven
7. Whilst in Antarctica, John Rymill's party lived by hunting what two food sources? a) _____ b) _____	8. At an RBG session Nona Verco presented: <i>The River Thames flows through Library.</i> What is the name of the Library? •
9. " <i>Bring him home</i> ": In which UK town was the reinterment of Captain Matthew Flinders RN? •	10. " <i>How one man telegraphed Australia to the modern world</i> ": Who is associated with this quote? •

<p>11. An ancient Greek scholar is commonly called the "<i>father of geography</i>" - for he was the first to use the word <i>geography</i>. (Circle your answer)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle • Eratosthenes • Herodotus • Ptolemy 	<p>12. Name the Sea between Australia and New Zealand?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>13. Mt Erebus is the second highest volcano in Antarctica. What is the name of the highest?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>14. Answer the question on slide?</p> 
<p>15. The only USA state with a one-syllable name is? Write your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>16. What capital city appears in the title of a 2014 movie film, starring Ralph Fiennes and directed by Wes Anderson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>17. Which term with Greek and Italian roots describes a collection or chain of islands, such as the Bahamas, Maldives and the Galápagos?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>18. The Icelandic geothermal location that shares the same name as a 1980 film is? Circle your answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Blue Lagoon • Xanadu • The Shining
<p>19. On the flag of the United Kingdom what does the Red Saltire (diagonal cross) represent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>20. Which country has the most natural lakes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Margie Dawson, Editor



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

Patrons: Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC
Governor of South Australia and Mr Rod Bunten

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL DETAILS 2025

Family name:	Initials:
Preferred given name:	Title:
If a family membership, partner's family name:	Initials:
Partner's preferred given name:	Title:
Address Line 1:	
Address Line 2:	
Suburb/Locality:	Postcode:
Email address(es):	
Telephone numbers:	
Occupation (current/former):	
Interests:	
What I enjoy about the Society, or hope to enjoy:	

NAME BADGES

Members can request a name badge to be worn at RGSSA events for \$15 each. Both first name and last name are included. If you wish to purchase a name badge (or two for family membership) please provide your preferred names below;

First Name: Last name:

First Name: Last name:

DONATIONS

To help advance the Society's objectives will you also consider making a **tax deductible donation** to the Society's Trust Funds to support growth in our geographical library, knowledge and information services; or more general geographical activities, awards and scholarships. **All donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible (a receipt will be issued for amounts greater than \$20).**

Yes, I would like to donate to the RGSSA Inc Trusts:

\$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 ☐ Other ☐ \$.....

ONLINE MEMBERSHIP

Membership applications and renewals can be completed using the RGSSA website

<https://rgssa.org.au/the-society/membership>

PAYMENT DETAILS

Membership Fees (Circle Category)

Ordinary	Concession/GTASA*	Overseas/Interstate	Student**	Institutional
\$90	\$70	\$65	\$35	\$140

Membership Subscription Fee: \$.....

Add \$15 for Family membership: \$ 15.00 (optional)

Add \$20 for posted hardcopy GeoNews \$ 20.00 (optional)

Name Badge(s)@ \$15 each \$ 15.00 (optional)

Donation to Library Fund \$.....

Donation to Lewis Scholarship Fund \$.....

Total amount payable: \$.....

Life Membership – Price on application (POA)

** Concession applies to Centrelink Pensioner Cardholders or current GTASA members only.*

*** Full time student at school or tertiary institution.*

PAYMENT METHODS

- Direct deposit** into our BankSA Society account:
BSB: 105-134 **Account:** 0793 30640. Quote first and last names in the bank transfer reference
- Cash – hand deliver to office only, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday mornings.**
- 3. Cheque – Payment by (enclosed) cheque number:**
- Credit Card –** Mastercard [] Visacard []

Card number _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Card expiry date/.....

Name on credit card (*please print*)

.....

Signature: _____ Date / /

FORM RETURN

Whichever payment method is chosen, please forward your payment and completed form to:

Royal Geographical Society of SA Inc. [ABN 93 978 549 002]
PO Box 3661 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000

[The completed form can be scanned and forwarded by email, to admin@rgssa.org.au]

ONLINE MEMBERSHIP

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<https://rgssa.org.au/the-society/membership>

MARCH – JUNE 2025 RARE BOOKS GROUP SESSIONS

Sessions are held in the Jervois Room, on the southern (North Terrace) end of the ground floor of the Mortlock wing in the State Library of South Australia, on the fourth Thursday of the month from 10.30am to 12 noon, unless otherwise indicated. Bookings need to be made through the Society's website: <https://rgssa.org.au>

DATE	PRESENTER	TOPIC
February & March	<i>No sessions – Due to the closure of the RGSSA Library and Mortlock Wing for renovations</i>	
Thursday 24 April	Frances Williams	<i>Discovering Africa: from Pliny to the travels of Dr Livingstone</i>
Thursday 29 May	Sally Hanley	<i>1660s Diary of Samuel Pepys, including Coronation of Charles II, Black Plague & Great Fire of London</i>
Thursday 26 June	Phil McCarthy	<i>Treasures of the East Indies: for over 4,000 years these islands provided a valuable source of spices to the world</i>

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

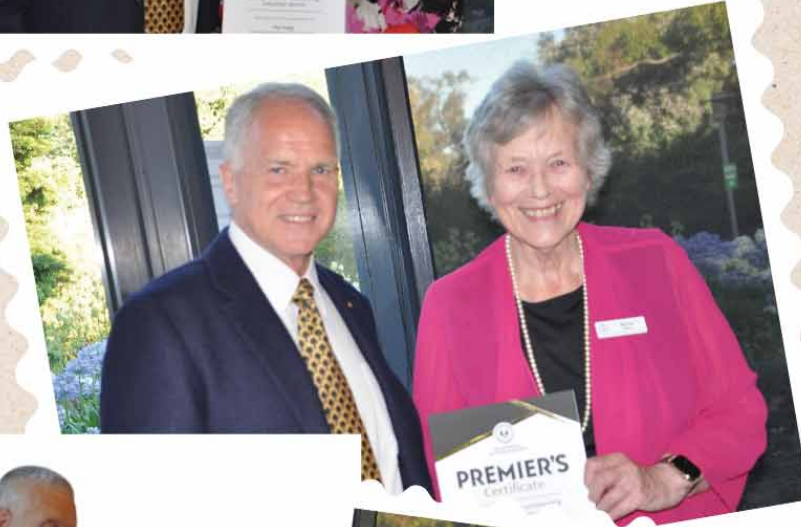
FEB - JUNE 2025 LECTURE PROGRAM AND EVENTS

The following lectures will be held at the Hetzel Room in the State Library of South Australia at North Terrace, commencing at 5:30 sharp. Doors open at 5 pm. Bookings will need to be made through the Society's new website <https://rgssa.org.au>. Please note that advertised lectures and speakers can change due to unforeseen circumstances.

DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC
Thursday 20 February <i>To be Advised</i>	Prof Udoy Saikia <i>To be Advised</i>	<i>Update on Timor Leste 5 years on To be Advised</i>
Thursday 27 March	Danielle Clode	<i>French Exploration in South Australia</i>
Thursday 10 April	Graham Walker	<i>How High am I? History of the Australian Height Datum</i>
Thursday 08 May	Sophie Thompson	<i>Save the World with gardening</i>
Thursday 19 June	Skye Krickauf	<i>Mapping early encounters of colonists with Aboriginal people</i>
<i>Details of further lectures for 2025 to be advised</i>		

The RGSSA Lecture Program is supported by the
State Library of South Australia

**ANNUAL
DINNER
AWARDS NIGHT
2024**



**M.C. DIRECTOR
IAIN HAY**