



October 2018

Wed 17 Lunch with Jim Bowler

Lunch with Jim Bowler, Wednesday 17 October

Science and the dreaming

Nature and culture at Lake Mungo: conflict or convergent?

The 1968 discovery of cremated human remains deep within shoreline sands of a then un-named basin in western NSW (later named Lake Mungo), opened a new chapter in Australian history. Dated even at that time as well beyond 20,000 years and known today as those of Mungo Lady, they stand as the oldest example of human cremation in the world. The discovery in 1974 just 400 metres away on the same sands of a ritually anointed, fully articulated male skeleton, Mungo Man, set this Willandra Lakes area on the pathway to its 1981 World Heritage inscription.

Mungo Man's burial records a ritual, extraordinary for its age and complexity. Enacted there on lake shores 40,000 years ago, it involved both fire and an ochre anointing ritual. It reflects a deep sense of spiritual connections with earth. A nature-culture conjunction, it expresses a cosmic awareness of land-people symbiosis. Long before any modern religion, the Mungo burials resonate with requiem rituals in any cathedral today. To a startled world, the reality of ancient Australians as a culturally sophisticated people suddenly became believable.

The bones went to the Australian National University for closer study. Our Aboriginal cousins were not pleased! Their objections were swift and uncompromising. 'This is our history, not yours!' Unwittingly, my colleague, the physical anthropologist the late Dr Alan Thorne and myself had reopened wounds of grave robbing and body snatching.

To validate post-Darwinian notions of white racial superiority, skulls were used as a measure of racial status. The method known as 'cranial profiling' was freely applied right here in Melbourne. Mr Murray Black, a Gippsland resident near my home town, Leongatha, collected skeletons by the hundred, many for the University of Melbourne. In Aboriginal eyes, Thorne and I had joined the grave robbers. Those memories were deep and painful.

What followed was more than we could have expected. From conflict, we reached an accord in 1989 to work together. More importantly, mutually different world views, scientific and traditional dreaming, began each to inform and learn from the other.

From the spiritually rich tapestry of Mungo Man's ritual burial, through the creation stories of indigenous peoples to the deep 'connection to country' of present Aboriginal descendants, the rational world of science came to complement rather than contradict the other. In this cross-cultural context each listens to and interacts with the other. Nature and culture, seen together in Mungo Man's time, generate new spirit energy today. That reality provided the Willandra Lakes World Heritage inscription.

While much has been achieved, huge problems remain. The bones have been brought home, but there's nowhere appropriate to put them. We await the Land-People Cultural Centre concept, where scientific stories of land together with the stories (and bones!) of its people expand that concept of 'what it means to be Australian'.

Jim Bowler obtained his MSc and PhD at ANU. His honours and awards include:

- Fellow of the Royal Society of Victoria, 1999
- Member of the Order of Australia, AM, 1999

We at CSA(V) Inc. are committed to protecting your personal information. It is only used by us to communicate with you about the Society's activities and its relations with the University of Cambridge. You may read our full Protection Statement and how it affects you on our website at: www.cambridgesociety.org.au/The-Society/Data-Protection-Statement/. The website allows you to unsubscribe from our communication if desired.

The Cambridge Society of Australia (Victoria) Inc.
A0030667D. ABN 82 869 550 988
secretary@cambridgesociety.org.au
Ph (03) 9596 1811
www.cambridgesociety.org.au

President: Mr. Chris Briggs
Secretary Mr. David Rees
Treasurer: Mr Jerry Platt
10 Village Close, Mount Martha VIC 3934

- Mawson Medal, Australian Academy of Sciences, 1989
- Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988
- Stillwell Medal, Geological Society of Australia.

This lunch will take place at the Savage Club at 12 noon for 12.30pm. The Club is at 12 Bank Place (off Collins Street) in the City. Cost is \$55 including drinks. All guests are most welcome; the more the better. Would you please advise Peter Baines at lunches@cambridgesociety.org.au or on 9820 2334 by latest Monday noon, 15 October, if you will be coming (and dietary requirements). Those emailing their intention to attend should ring Peter to confirm if they receive no email confirmation from him within 24 hours of booking.

Diary dates

14 Nov	Lunch with Caroline Forrest
12 Dec	AGM and Varsity Match

Caroline Forrest will talk on the many transport projects within the Melbourne area.

Last month

Annual dinner with Chloe Munro, Friday 7 September

As ever, a splendid evening was had at the Melbourne Club.

Our speaker, Chloe Munro AO, began by speaking about her childhood in Scotland. It was through a family friend that she first thought about going to Cambridge.

She moved on to her extensive experience with Australia's energy transformation, overseeing energy market reform in Victoria, and as Chair of Clean Energy Regulator etc.

She spoke about the entry of new technologies into the energy market and the engineering challenges this brings to supplying energy and operating the market. For example, in the evening as the sun sets there is a 'duck curve' among solar resources, which presents operational challenges.

She also focused on the economics of new technologies, which are now cheaper than conventional and traditional fuels.

She discussed her role in the Finkel review, and her disappointment that the National Energy Guarantee didn't proceed.

Commercials

*Oceania entrepreneurs forum in Sydney,
Saturday 6 October*

Initiated by CAMentrepreneurs, this event aims to bring together entrepreneurial-minded students, alumni and entrepreneurs in the ANZ region by providing them with the opportunities to interact, learn and connect. In addition, the event comprises roadshows of our selected business projects.

The event will be taking place at Cockle Bay Conference Room 1, ICC Sydney, Darling Harbor, Sydney NSW 2000

Look on our Facebook page or [here](#) for details of how to book.

If you have an offer, message or request of a personal or not-for-profit nature that you would like us to include in this section, please contact the editor at newsletter@cambridgesociety.org.au.

Snippets

We acknowledge our particular debt to Varsity and to the University News Release Service.

Nearly half of Cambridge investment office staff resign

The University's Investment Office has faced criticism in recent months for its approach to investing Cambridge's endowment.

Four senior members of Cambridge's investment office have resigned from their positions, out of a staff of nine. Chief Investment Officer Nick Cavalla will leave the investment office later this year, alongside colleagues Bruce Lockwood, Conor Cassidy and Vincent Fruchard.

Their resignations come four months after a divestment working group report called for the office's practices to be made more transparent at the tail end of mounting pressure from staff and student activists for the University to divest its endowment from fossil fuels.

The four senior members oversaw the university endowment fund's main investment pot worth £3.3bn.

Cambridge's investment office manages its investments and £6.3bn endowment – the centre of the divestment debate. The University currently

holds no direct investments in the fossil fuels sector's most pollutive industries, and has a policy of keeping its indirect investments in tar sands and thermal coal industries 'to the bare minimum'.

Pro-divestment campaigning group Cambridge Zero Carbon Society had previously called for Cavalla's resignation after the Council's divestment decision in June, saying in a statement: 'We call on the University's Chief Financial Officer Anthony Odgers, Chief Investment Officer Nick Cavalla and Director of Finance David Hughes, hired from Shell, to resign.'

Speaking on Cavalla's resignation, Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope said: 'He has transformed the performance of our investment fund, enabling us to diversify our income in a way that has allowed the University to undertake developments which have greatly benefited our academic mission and our students.'

Mia Watanabe, a spokesperson for Cambridge Zero Carbon Society, commented on the four resignations of Investment Office staff: 'Now is the time to build an open, transparent Investment Office, an office led by the concerns of staff and students and fully divested from fossil fuels,' adding that the plan 'to reject divestment [...] carries no legitimacy'.

In late July, two formal requests for a review of the Council decision were submitted – one by Cambridge Zero Carbon Society, and the other by a group of academics. They await a response within three months of submission.

The four senior members are set to join Talisman Global Asset Management, the investment arm for the Pears family – one of the wealthiest families in the UK.

Cavalla said that it 'felt like the right time to take on a new challenge' away from the University, after joining in 2008.

Cambridge retains second place as Oxford tops *Times Higher Education* rankings

Cambridge has remained at second place in the *Times Higher Education* (THE) World University rankings, while Oxford has topped the rankings for the third consecutive year. Oxford also came top in the global table for research, in which Cambridge claimed second.

The UK has been surpassed for the first time as the second-most represented nation overall in the listing, amid fears that Brexit threatens the UK's higher education sector. Japan has overtaken the

UK, with 103 positions in the listing, as compared to the UK's 98.

The United Kingdom has, however, remained the second-most represented nation in the top 200 rankings, but 21 of the 29 represented British universities have suffered from stagnation or decline.

Speaking about the rankings, Phil Baty, Editorial Director of Global Rankings at THE, said that there are 'individual stars' in the UK this year, but the overall picture is of 'stagnation and modest decline'. He added, 'we can only speculate at this stage as to any connection with Brexit', but warned that Brexit poses a 'very real' threat to British universities' reputation and research capabilities.

Commenting further on the threat of Brexit, Baty suggested that British and European universities will be under strong pressure should Brexit limit pan-European mobility and research collaboration.

He also cautioned that with intensifying global competition from emerging countries prioritising higher-level education in their growth strategies, maintaining world-class excellence amidst cuts and advancing isolationism is 'simply unsustainable'.

He stressed that positive immigration and investment policies are crucial to ensure that universities can continue to attract the very best international students and talent post-Brexit, as well as to be protected from cuts.

Amidst the overall drop in the UK's performance, there are individual improvements. University College London has advanced to 14th place this year, with particular improvement to its teaching score, while the University of Warwick has scaled 12 places, now joint in the 79th position with the University of Groningen.

The THE World University rankings assess five aspects of research-intensive universities around the world – teaching, research, international outlook, citations and industry income – in 13 performance indicators.

Graduate Union launches campaign to combat 'toxic' PhD supervision culture

The Graduate Union (GU) has launched a campaign to address highly competitive PhD supervision culture in Cambridge, aimed at mitigating a prevalence within the graduate student population of mental health issues stemming from intense study.

The campaign, 'Graduate Rights: Changing the culture of PhD Supervisions', is aimed at 'accountable and responsible PhD supervisions'. For Nikita Hari, vice-president of the GU, this is a 'key priority' for the year.

The campaign targets 'toxic and abusive supervision culture', placing emphasis on combatting unhealthy dynamics between supervisors and research students, which GU has argued may cause or worsen mental health problems.

The 2018 CUSU Big Cambridge survey found that 55% of postgraduate students have suffered from mental health problems in the last year.

A 2017 study in *Nature* magazine found that for over 5,700 students surveyed globally, of the quarter of PhD students listed mental health as a concern, 45% sought help for anxiety or depression caused by their studies.

Hari told *Varsity* that 'beyond abusive and irresponsible supervisors, poor supervision can mean little time with their supervisor, poor or non-existent feedback, undue stress and work-life imbalance leading to an unhealthy way of life.'

Hari plans to improve the 'code of practice' (CoP) for research students, creating 'better and clearer conflict navigation procedures for PhDs and dissemination of information to post-graduates about the University services.'

On their website services such as the Students' Unions' Advice Service, the University Counselling Service and the Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor are listed among others.

There is an existing CoP for research students that Hari describes as an 'important governance document' that 'defines the roles and responsibilities of PhD supervisor and PhD student'.

The GU's campaign will 'focus on changing the supervision culture through four parallel approaches: changing the inadequate and unfair guidelines and research practices, improving convoluted conflict navigation procedures and increasing information sharing of university services.'

GU has been lobbying to introduce a contract system for PhDs - which Hari told *Varsity* is 'aimed at creating a contract between the University ... and students to ensure accountable and responsible PhD supervision' - with the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Board of Graduate Studies, and Education Policy Office. The team have been successful in including a signature page in the CoP for the next academic year.

A University spokesperson said: 'The University of Cambridge and its colleges take student mental health very seriously', arguing, 'the level of support available to students at the University of Cambridge is unparalleled in most other universities.'

However they also noted that 'Cambridge has unique challenges that other universities don't face', citing the tougher courses packed into shorter terms, and the higher expectations of students.

They also added that students 'cope with this against an unhelpful media backdrop that too often vilifies our students for seeking help'.

The GU hopes that their campaign 'will ensure good working practices, accountability from supervisors and the departments in ensuring a fair and healthy working environment'.

This article was updated to include additional information on the GU's campaign, and to amend the headline to be more representative of the main objective of the campaign, on 21 September.