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## Conversations and Material Memories: Insights into Outback Household Practices at the Old Kinchega Homestead

### ABSTRACT

Since 1996, the Kinchega Archaeological Research Project (KARP) has been conducting a household archaeology project at the late-19th- to mid-20th-century Old Kinchega Homestead in outback New South Wales, Australia. The research is driven by investigations of the homestead's material remains, but interactions with the local community are providing oral and documentary evidence that play a significant role, both as a contextual framework and in steering the project's research agenda. This article discusses how different people, and different types of interactions and processes involved in gathering personal histories throughout the project, are impacting the interpretative procedures used for investigating household consumption practices at Old Kinchega Homestead.

### Introduction

With growing interest in the archaeologies of the recent past (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2009), oral history is becoming an increasingly important component of community archaeology. Many such archaeologies invariably highlight “place [as] a defining aspect of identity” (Hemming et al. 2000:331) and use place as a focus for and a stimulator of memory (Bender 1993; Mayne and Lawrence 1998; Ireland and Lydon 2005:1–2). Some researchers advocate “relinquishing ... at least partial control of a project to the local community” (Marshall 2002)—see also Waterton and Smith (2010:7)—and oral histories that give greater priority to, input into, or even initiation of interpretations of the past from outside the scholarly community (Kabaila 1996; Paterson et al. 2003). In this context, Beck and Somerville (2005) discussed different types of conversations, ranging from informal, unstructured discussions to more formal, structured interviews, and the different kinds of oral information that

these have contributed to their “interdisciplinary” community-based project, a project that focuses on understanding Aboriginal place knowledge and involves historical archaeology and indigenous oral history in Australia.

The current article discusses a series of relatively informal and largely unstructured encounters, or conversations, concerning place—personal, household space—and explores memories of the specific domestic practices of people who either lived in or owned that place, which was in a remote rural environment in Australia. The article highlights the varied roles of the predominantly European middle-class community members in these conversations—roles as interviewees, interviewers, analysts, and consumers of the resulting research—and how this rather unintentional oral history has shaped the research process of the Kinchega Archaeological Research Project.

### Background

The Old Kinchega Homestead is in western New South Wales (NSW), a region with a ca. 30,000-year history of indigenous occupation (Balme 1995; Rainbird et al. 1997:5–12), first explored by Europeans in 1835 and settled shortly thereafter by pastoralists (Allison 2003:162–163). The first “sheep camp” known as Kinchega Station was documented in 1851 and was followed by several short leases over the next 20 years (Hardy 1969:65). The word “Kinchega” refers to the “two waters” of the Darling River and the Menindee Lakes system, which provided important food resources for indigenous people before the arrival of Europeans (Peter Freeman Pty. Ltd. [Peter Freeman] 2002[1]:14–19; Allison 2003:162–163; Pardoe 2003). Kinchega is also a well-known place in Australia's national history. The famous and ill-fated explorers, Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills, reportedly camped at “Peter MacGregor's ‘Kinchega’ steamer landing” prior to their fatal journey—an attempt to cross central Australia from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria—and their deaths in October 1860

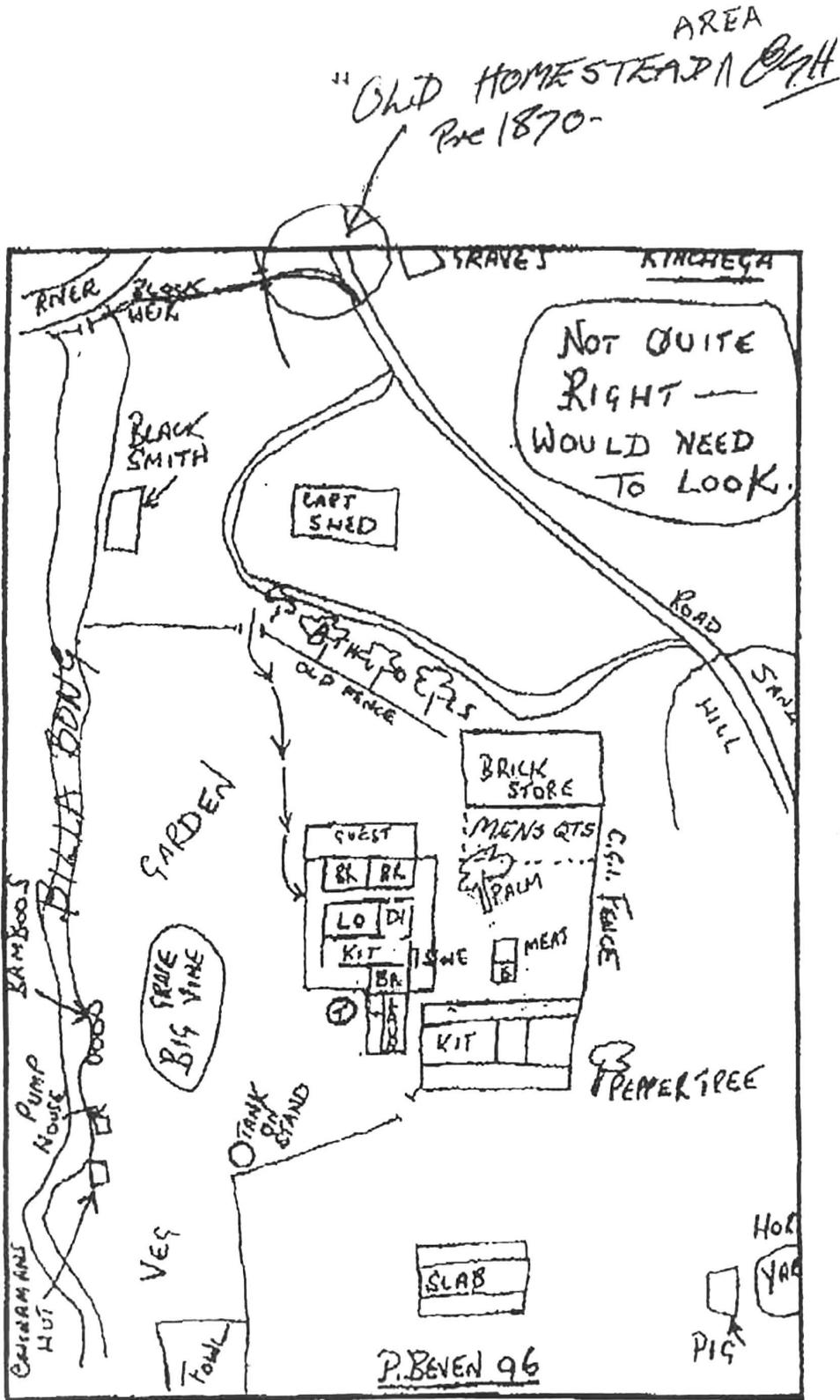


FIGURE 1. Annotated sketch plan of the Old Kinchega Homestead. North is toward the bottom of the plan. (Drawing by Peter Beven, 1996; annotated by E. G. Hughes, 1998.)

(Kearns 1970:3; Maiden 1989:34). One of the station's former managers, William Wright, had assisted in this expedition (Hardy 1969:122–128; Bonyhardy 1991:113–115,120–123).

In 1870 the Kinchega lease was bought from George Urquart by Herbert Bristow Hughes (Kearns 1970:3). Hughes added further sheep runs to his portfolio, until, in a few short years, the Kinchega Pastoral Estate ran up to 160,000 sheep and stretched from the Darling River to the foothills of the Barrier Ranges, where Australia's major mining company, Broken Hill Proprietary Company, was established in 1883 (Kearns 1970:4–9,19; Peter Freeman 2002[2]:20–23). The Kinchega Estate remained in H. B. Hughes's name until the lease expired in 1967, and the eastern end, including the Old Kinchega Homestead and Darling River frontage, was converted into the Kinchega National Park (Allison and Cremin 2006:Figure 1). Under the Hughes's long leasehold, the Kinchega Estate became an important player in Australia's essential wool industry, experiencing fluctuating fortunes, but also changing communication networks, with telephones, trains, and motorized transport replacing river transport, stagecoaches, and bullock wagons (Schmidt 1997:121–132; Meredith and Dyster 1999:52–68,100–102,123,136–138), which gave access to more varied diet, and increased household consumption and social interaction. This was also the period before and after Australian Federation (1901), when an Australian society, distinct from its colonial past, was created (Cremin 2001).

How can relationships between these changing socioeconomic conditions and household consumption patterns be mapped, and what insights might domestic practices at the Old Kinchega Homestead provide into social behavior in remote regions of the British colonial world, particularly into the complex relationships between social mores, individual choice, and market access?

### **Kinchega Archaeological Research Project Fieldwork**

The ruined remains of the Old Kinchega Homestead, the residence of managers and overseers on the station, located not far from the Darling River, have survived the homestead's abandonment, for a site nearer the woolshed, and its partial demolition in the 1960s (Allison 2003:figure 2). This demolition, prior to the

1977 New South Wales Heritage Act, was in keeping with the tendencies of environmental managers at that time and a concept of a "*pristine wilderness*" (Griffiths 1996:255–277; Ireland 2003:57; Ireland and Lydon 2005).

In April 1996, Paul Rainbird (Charles Sturt University, Broken Hill) invited the author to codirect a field school at the Old Kinchega Homestead for undergraduate cultural heritage studies students from Charles Sturt University campuses at Albury and Broken Hill, initiating the Kinchega Archaeological Research Project (KARP). Members of the Menindee Aboriginal Land Council (MALC) also took part in this field school, which carried out a brief surface recording of evidence for post-contact activities at this site (Rainbird et al. 1997). As a household and historical archaeologist, the author was responsible for the predominant European history of the homestead itself. Paul Rainbird and his colleague, Sam Wickman, focused on evidence for post-contact indigenous use of the area.

In 1997 Rainbird moved to the University of Wales, Lampeter, and the author became sole director of KARP. In 1998, it was decided to focus investigation on the household archaeology of the homestead through a field school for archaeology students from the University of Sydney. This work was awarded a grant by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSWNPWS) to document all the above-ground structures associated with the site's European occupation (Allison 1998a). Between 1999 and 2002, three further field schools took place with undergraduate archaeology students from the University of Sydney and the Australian National University, and additional volunteers, investigating household practices within the homestead (Allison 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Allison and Cremin 2003). These field schools involved excavations at the main residential buildings and targeted surface collection of artifacts from the homestead dump. Post-excavation analyses of these artifacts and archival research continued until 2010, with assistance from students and volunteers (Allison 2003; Allison and Cremin 2006).

### **Collecting Oral History on the Old Kinchega Homestead**

The following discussion summarizes the various processes and interactions with members of the local community that have contributed oral

history to KARP's investigation of the homestead and its material remains.

Some of the Broken Hill Cultural Heritage Studies students were so motivated by their field school in 1996 that they took it upon themselves to follow up leads in their own community, which resulted in KARP's first encounters with former inhabitants of the Old Kincheha Homestead. One student, Robin Taylor, was a descendant of some of these inhabitants. Another, Naomi Schmidt, talked to her neighbor Peter Beven, owner of the 75,000 ha Sturt's Meadows Station, about 120 km by road from Eldee Station, which is owned by Naomi and her husband (Allison 1998b:23, 2003:167–169). Peter Beven's father, Albert Robert Beven, was an overseer at Kincheha Station from 1943 to 1949, and his family had lived in the Old Kincheha Homestead when Peter was a young boy. The most significant outcome of Naomi's conversations with her neighbor was the labeled sketch plan Peter drew of the homestead as he remembered it from childhood (Figure 1). This plan has been an invaluable guide for KARP's exploration and interpretation of the complex, and also for decisions on where to excavate.

Naomi went on to do her honors thesis in archaeology at the University of New England (Armidale, NSW), studying the relationships between the global economy and pastoral investment patterns in western NSW (Schmidt 1997). Her argument, that the latter were more dependent on regional conditions than on the boom-and-bust cycles of world wool prices, is an important demonstration of the general complexity of socioeconomic conditions in this region and their relationship to the world economy. Naomi took part in KARP's 1999 fieldwork and brought her neighbor, Peter Beven, to visit the project at the homestead.

Naomi's interview, Peter's subsequent visit to the site, and the author's ongoing emails and telephone conversations with Peter have provided fundamental information on the spatial arrangements of the homestead and the adaptations made during his family's residence there, and also the names of other inhabitants of the homestead complex, including cooks and gardeners. The 1998 KARP fieldwork report also prompted further memories from Peter that have informed the project (Peter Beven 1999, pers. comm.).

A short report on Naomi's and Peter's first meeting and his sketch plan were included in the

1997 KARP report (Rainbird et al. 1997:43–44, figure 4.1). This inspired the Kincheha National Park ranger, Lisa Menke, to carry out a further interview with Peter that, together with the KARP report, became the basis for interpretative signage put up around the homestead in early 1998 by the Kincheha National Parks staff. This signage includes photographs, collected by Lisa Menke, that give insights into the homestead's earlier layout (Figure 2).

During fieldwork at Kincheha the KARP teams have been accommodated in the shearer's quarters, 3 km from the homestead, beside the woolshed. These quarters have been converted by Kincheha National Park for the accommodation of park staff and park visitors. Rangers and some field officers also live in the neighboring New Kincheha Homestead. These park staff often joined the excavation team for a drink or dinner after work and discussed various people who had connections with the Old Kincheha Homestead. This applied particularly to the park's field officer, Rick Taylor, the husband of Robin Taylor, whose father and aunts had lived in the homestead as children.

After the field school in June–July 1998, the author traveled to the Broken Hill region to meet various people whose names and addresses had been provided by Peter Beven and the Kincheha National Park staff. For this trip, the author devised a questionnaire formulated to address initial questions related to the homestead's construction and organization, and the identifications and domestic practices of the different inhabitants. The first stop was neighboring Kars Station, ca. 60 km from the national park, still owned by the Hughes family and, at that time, managed by John (Tom) Hughes and his wife Anne. Tom is the great-grandson of H. B. Hughes. Tom had not lived at the Old Kincheha Homestead, but, sitting around his kitchen table, he provided information on the homestead inhabitants and produced family photograph albums that included images of the homestead and the associated billabong. Particularly pertinent to KARP's objectives were photographs taken when H. B. Hughes, who had lived 650 km away in Adelaide, visited the homestead with family members and friends. These images obviously predated his death in 1892 and, as Tom surmised, probably dated from the major flood of the Darling River in 1890 (Figure 3).

Equally importantly, Tom offered to send excerpts from KARP's first report (Rainbird et



FIGURE 2. Kinchega National Parks sign with photograph of the Old Kinchega Homestead taken by Bertha Hayes, labeled ca. 1890. (Photo by Aedeon Cremin, 2010.)

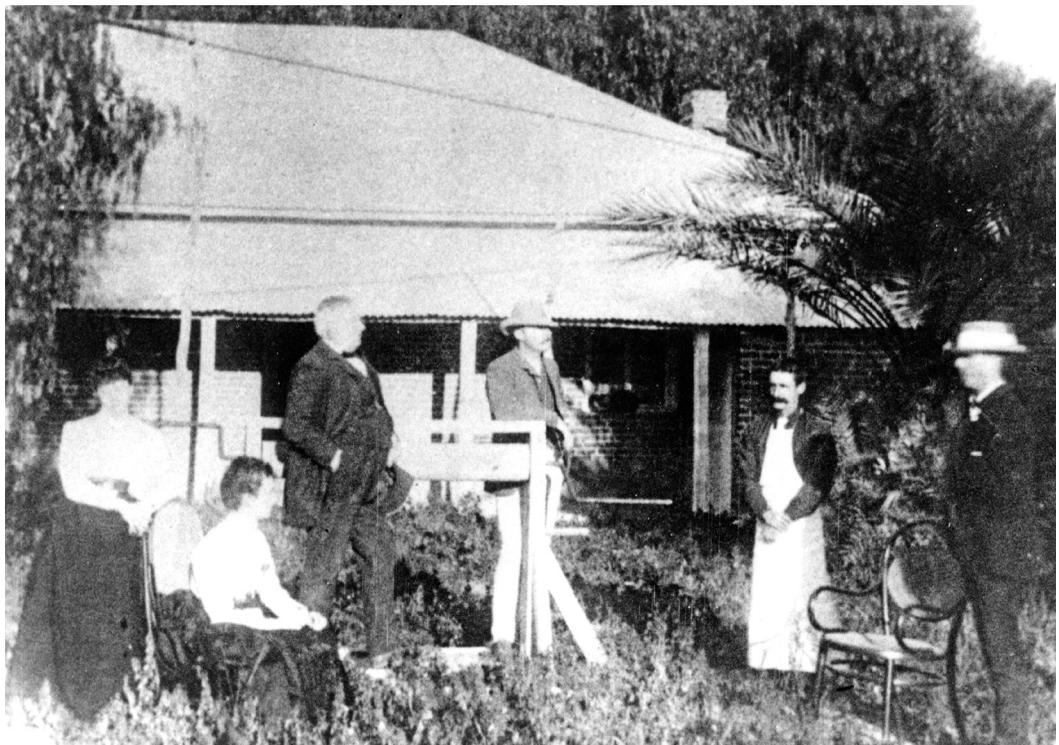


FIGURE 3. View of west side of the Old Kinchega Homestead. From *left*: Florence Hawker, “Sissie” (probably Laura Sophia), H. B. Hughes, Edgar Hughes, possibly the cook, unknown. Probably taken in 1890. (Photo courtesy of Tom Hughes.)

al. 1997) and the questionnaire to his father, E. Gwynne Hughes, who also lived in Adelaide. E. G. Hughes's most significant contribution to interpreting the history of the Old Kinchega Homestead is his annotation of a copy of Peter Beven's sketch plan (Figure 1). On this plan he circled an area to the south of the Old Kinchega Homestead and wrote: "OLD HOMESTEAD AREA/EGH/Pre 1870" (E. G. Hughes 1998, pers. comm.). Remains of bricks and ceramics are still visible at this location, but unfortunately smashed into small fragments by an access road to the Darling River (Allison 1998a). E. G. Hughes's annotation left little doubt that the homestead the team was studying was not the one visited by Burke and Wills in 1860. He also informed me that his family only ever holidayed at Kinchega, which he found very boring as a young boy. Tom Hughes, and also his son, Fred Hughes, have given the project permission to study the Kinchega Pastoral Estate bookkeeping records, held at Kars Station. These records, studied in 2000 and again in 2010,

have provided the main archival information for the author's focus on household consumption practices (Allison and Band 2013).

During the 1998 trip the author visited Robin Taylor in her bookshop in Broken Hill. Robin contacted her Aunt Margaret (Carter) who lived at Kingston, south of Adelaide, and sent her a questionnaire devised specifically for her. Many subsequent conversations took place between Mrs. Carter and her niece Robin (Robin Taylor 1998, 2002, pers. comm.), and were relayed to me by letter, fax, and email. Robin's grandparents, Arthur and Bertha Hayes, lived in the homestead between 1915 and 1928, while Arthur had been the overseer of Kinchega Station. Her father, Owen, and his three sisters—Margaret, Claudine, and Muriel—lived there as young children. Robin has also provided information about her family's domestic life at the homestead and has lent KARP negatives made by her grandmother. Bertha Hayes was an amateur photographer, no doubt with a darkroom somewhere at the homestead. She photographed her



FIGURE 4. Hayes children in the east garden of the Old Kinchega Homestead. (Photo by Bertha Hayes, ca. 1915–1925; courtesy of Robin Taylor.)

house, garden, and children (Figure 4). Most importantly, she took the photograph used in the Kinchege National Park's signage, one showing the homestead at some stage between 1915 and 1928 (Figure 2).

Paul Rainbird and Sam Wickman's field survey to the south of the homestead in 1996 identified worked-glass artifacts with associated campfires, indicating that Aboriginal people had used the area after Europeans arrived (Rainbird et al. 1997:31–38). Although there were reports of Aboriginal people camping in this particular area (Martin et al. 1994:8; Rainbird et al. 1997:46), Rainbird was unable to find anyone who could provide further oral-historical information on this occupation (Rainbird et al. 1997:53).

After Paul Rainbird left Broken Hill in 1997, it proved impossible to obtain any response from the Menindee Aboriginal Land Council to discuss further involvement in KARP and to find out more about the indigenous occupation. Also staying at the Kinchege shearers' quarters, during the second season of fieldwork in 1998, was a group from Pooncarie, some 150 km south of Kinchege National Park, along the Darling River. This group included Aboriginal people who were visiting Menindee for the 80th birthday party of a friend and family member. Staying with them in the shearers' quarters were Badger Bates, the national park's Aboriginal sites officer, and his wife Sarah Martin, a consultant archaeologist. Sarah and Badger brought a number of the older women, from both Pooncarie and Menindee, and also members of the MALC to visit the Old Kinchege Homestead to see whether the place jolted any memories from them. A pleasant afternoon was spent giving these visitors a tour around the ruined homestead area and discussing various plants and personal memories, but none recalled anything that specifically related to the place. When Sarah Martin talked with Alice Bugmy and Lorraine King later, however, Alice Bugmy told her that her family and other Aboriginal people had camped near there in the early 20th century, and Lorraine King pointed out the area of Aboriginal campsites near the homestead (Peter Freeman 2002[1]:37, [2]:9–10).

Names and contact details of other people who had associations with the homestead were also provided through the encounters outlined

above, but it was not possible to establish personal contact with these people on the 1998 trip. During the visit, though, accommodation was provided by Naomi Schmidt on Eldee Station. Naomi subsequently attempted to contact Mrs. Aileen Morphett, daughter of Jim Underdown, who had reportedly been the bookkeeper at Kinchege Station (Naomi Schmidt 1998, pers. comm.). Unfortunately, Mrs. Morphett, who had inherited the Albermarle Hotel in Menindee, had had a stroke a few weeks earlier and was not available to participate. But Naomi put the author in touch with her son, Jim Warren, who provided contact details for his cousin, Jim McLennan, living in Adelaide. In a telephone conversation, Jim Warren recalled walking from Menindee to the Old Kinchege Homestead and remembered a cellar there.

The author had relatively informal telephone conversations and exchanges of letters with Jim McLennan. Jim's father, Donald McLennan, had been an overseer at Kinchege Station and moved into the homestead with his family in 1931, when Jim was seven. Jim had fond boyhood memories of Kinchege and, unlike E. G. Hughes, loved his life as a kind of outback Huckleberry Finn: exploring the various sheds full of farm machinery around the homestead complex and catching *yabbies* (freshwater crayfish) in the billabong using a sheep's head in a kerosene can (Jim McLennan 1999, pers. comm.). Jim visited the homestead in the 1950s or 1960s, before it had been partially demolished, and provided KARP with color transparencies of this visit (an example is shown in Figure 5). He also annotated a copy of Peter Beven's plan, identifying the location of a "two-seater toilet" (Jim McLennan 1999, pers. comm.).

During a 1998 visit to Kars Station, Tom Hughes provided contact details for his cousin, Chris Hughes. After sending Chris a copy of the 1998 field report and the author's questionnaire, Chris named some of the people in Tom's family photograph (Figure 3) and identified his grandfather, Harold White Hughes (son of H. B. Hughes), as the station's manager who lived in the homestead between 1887 and 1915. Chris also provided information on other overseers who lived at the homestead, such as Michael Pheland, who he said had moved to Kinchege in 1931. This information conflicts

with Jim McLennan's chronology, however. In addition, Chris provided a copy of a pencil-and-wash drawing of the Old Kinchega Homestead, dated 1878 (Figure 6) (Hughes 2001:6A). This

drawing confirms its construction date of ca. 1876. While in Adelaide in 2001 the author had lunch with Chris Hughes, who described his private research into the Kinchega Pastoral



FIGURE 5. Old Kinchega Homestead from east, ca. 1950s–1960s. (Photo by Jim McLennan.)

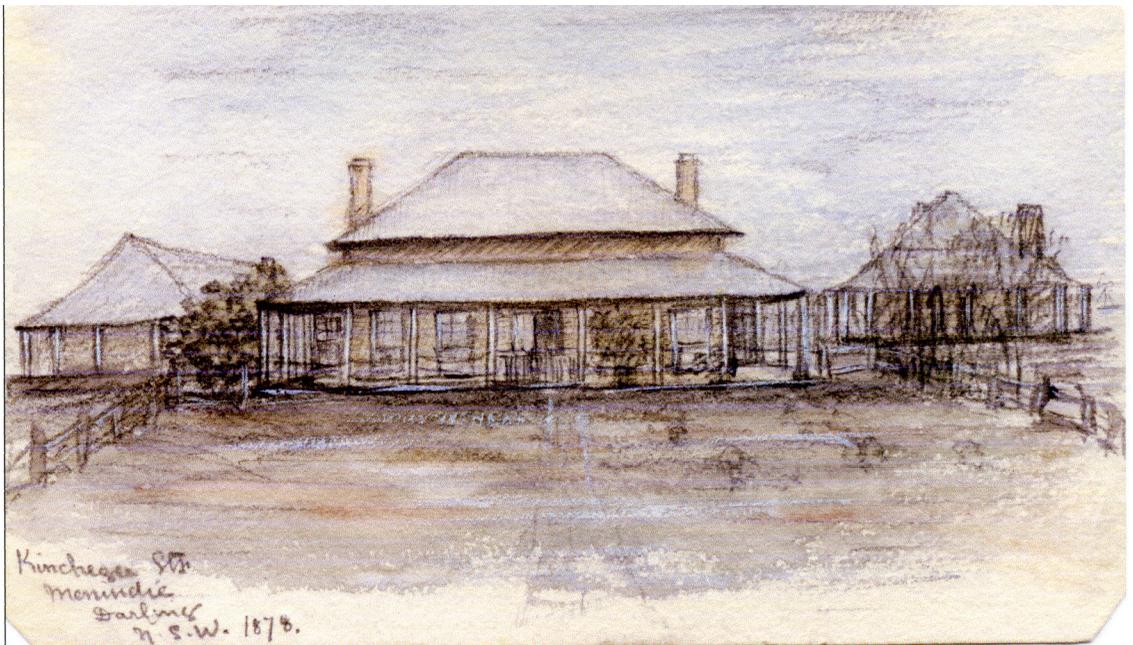


FIGURE 6. Pencil-and-wash drawing of Old Kinchega Homestead, dated 1878. (Photo courtesy of Chris Hughes.)

Estate. Chris visited Kinchega that August, and his detailed, illustrated report of the visit identified archaeological remains of two sites of potential European habitation to the south of the area surveyed by KARP (Hughes 2001). These sites appear to be marked out on a ca. 1890 cadastral map of the Kinchega Estate (Hughes 2001:3–4A) and are likely to have been associated with the pre-1878 homestead, remains of which can be identified nearby (Peter Freeman 2002[2]:24, figures 19–20).

In the course of the 2000 fieldwork season, one of the students chatted with Noleen (Sissy) Clarke, who was working at the Albermarle Hotel in Menindee. She was the youngest member of the last family to live in the homestead. This encounter necessitated another trip into Menindee and a night at the pub to talk with Sissy. Her father, Harry Files, was the overseer at Kinchega during the 1950s, and in 1955, when Sissy was five, the family moved into the new homestead nearer to the woolshed. As a young child, Sissy's memories of the Old Kinchega Homestead were rather hazy, but she recalled the existence of a cellar housing a collection of Aboriginal artifacts.

Through these “word-of-mouth” and networking processes, often involving family members as investigators, KARP made contact with several people connected to the Old Kinchega Homestead. But not all informants were reached by this relatively local process. The homestead is on an international tourist route for an “out-back experience.” Each day during fieldwork, a dozen-or-so cars, caravans, and motor homes visited the homestead. As part of their training in public archaeology and cultural heritage, students in the field schools were posted on tourist duty, handing out project leaflets to these visitors and giving them guided tours of the site. These leaflets obviously made their way around the country and possibly around the world. Shortly after the 1998 field season a telephone call was received from Tom Chapman (Goolwa, South Australia), who was in possession of one of these leaflets. His mother, Mrs. Bobbie Chapman, was the granddaughter of Henry T. Phillips, manager of Kinchega Station from 1877 to 1887. Tom told me that Bobbie's father, Samuel Phillips, lived in the Old Kinchega Homestead as a child, with his three sisters Alice, Edith, and Emily, and recalled going to school in

Adelaide on a paddle steamer. Henry T. Phillips and his family were possibly the first inhabitants of the homestead. Subsequently, in August 1998, Bobbie's daughter-in-law, Wendy Chapman, who is researching the Chapman family history, provided much information about the Phillipses, although little about their life at the homestead.

The outline above highlights the rather unstructured manner in which an oral history of the Old Kinchega Homestead has been compiled and information shared. In most instances this oral history commenced with rather random conversations. Some of these chats have themselves provided important information on the domestic history and changing use of space at the Old Kinchega Homestead. Some have instigated further informal conversations and interviews (e.g., Robin Taylor with her aunt, and Jim McLennan). Others have led to the distribution of more formal questionnaires (e.g., to E. G. Hughes and Chris Hughes). And some have resulted in site tours and individual visits to the sites, initiated by the informants themselves, which have been variously productive. However, the ongoing conversations have often provided more detailed and more specific information on homestead inhabitants, their domestic practices, living conditions, and transport systems than the initial questionnaires. These follow-up interactions have taken the form of a web of letters, faxes, emails, and telephone calls, accompanied by family photographs and documents. To some extent this approach has been necessitated by the vast distances involved. This “local community” is scattered among Broken Hill, Menindee, and Pooncarie in NSW, and Adelaide, Goolwa, and Kingston in South Australia, encompassing distances of up to 1,000 km. The author was based ca. 1,000 km away in the opposite direction, in Sydney and Canberra. The involvement of family members in forwarding questionnaires and their own conversations with their elderly relatives have played a fundamental role in information gathering and in the analyses of the material remains of the homestead. Peter Beven's input has been invaluable for understanding the relationships of the components of the homestead during the 1940s. The memories of E. G. Hughes, Margaret Carter, Jim McLennan, Bobbie Chapman, and Noleen Clarke, and the researches of Chris Hughes, have added historical depth to Peter's recollections.

### Contributions of These Oral Histories to the Research Process of KARP

In some instances these oral sources and their accompanying documentary sources have provided important background information for archaeological investigations of household practices at the Old Kinchege Homestead. In others they have either explained excavated findings or steered them. In terms of addressing some questions, though, oral sources have been disappointing. There is not space to present all such cases here, so some examples are discussed.

The main contribution of this oral research has been to establish or clarify the names and the dates for the various occupancies of the homestead (Allison 2003:table 1). The Kinchege Pastoral Estate records and Kearns (1970) provide names of managers and some overseers and homestead workers. Through this oral research the author has been able to flesh out these records and learn more about homestead occupants not in the employ of the estate (including women and children). These conversations have emphasized the fact that the families who lived in the homestead were largely made up of young children. They have, however, provided limited information on homestead workers whose lives only marginally impacted these young children's memories.

The interactions have also contributed a chronology for the structural development of the homestead complex. E. G. Hughes commented that the first investment by the Kinchege Pastoral Estate went into building a woolshed in 1876, or, according to Peter Freeman Pty. Ltd. (2002[2]:83), in 1875; Hughes further commented that the homestead would have been built after the 1890 flood, but this has been disproved by the 1878 homestead drawing (Figure 6). The combined information indicates that the Old Kinchege Homestead was built between 1876 and 1878, replacing the earlier one on the river floodplain ca. 600 m to the south. The earlier homestead was beside the Kinchege steamer landing, where Burke and Wills had camped and where Samuel Phillips departed for school in Adelaide in the 1880s.

Tom Hughes's photograph of the west side of the main homestead building indicates that a wing was added to the south end of the main building between 1878 and 1892 (Figure

3). Bertha Hayes's photograph was surely taken when she lived there in the early decades of the 20th century, not in 1890 as indicated in the park's signage (Figure 2). In this photograph, the size of the date palm in the west garden, when compared with that in Tom Hughes's photograph, confirms the earlier date for the latter. Most notable in Bertha Hayes's photograph is a further building added to the north of the main building. Jim McLennan's color transparency indicates that, by the 1950s, the homestead was a much less grand and more utilitarian residence than it had been in the late 19th century, or even in the 1910s and 1920s, when it was first converted from a manager's to an overseer's residence (Figure 5). According to E. G. Hughes, the homestead was abandoned in 1955 because of the cost of its upkeep, and so the overseer could be closer to his men and the woolshed. This date concurs with Sissy Clark's memories.

KARP's excavations in 1999 and 2000 revealed plaster remains from the main homestead building (Building A), indicating that many of the rooms were originally lime plastered and painted sky blue, and that the veranda woodwork was painted white and then green (Allison 2002a:14–16, 2003:181–182). Some of the internal areas were later overpainted in red, notably the living room (Room 5), then cream or yellow, and finally green. The bathroom (Room 2X) was all light green. Many of the walls had been cement rendered at a later date, presumably to cope with increasing damp or the crumbling of the poorly made bricks.

The photographs provided by the informants confirm the changes to the painting of the homestead exterior, with open verandas and white veranda posts, later closed in with wire mesh and painted dark green (Figures 2 and 5). Peter Beven remembered much about the furniture in each room of the house (Peter Beven 1999, pers. comm.). Neither he nor Jim McLennan—who recalled details of the sheds, workshops, and machinery around the homestead complex—was clear about the interior decoration of their former abode, however. A copy of a color photograph, probably taken in the late 1960s or 1970s, was provided in August 2010 by Fred and Pip Hughes, passed to them by park staff. It shows Peter Beven's father standing to the east of Room 7, his bedroom, which was still painted blue, and the hallway (Room 6) and living



FIGURE 7. Old Kinchega Homestead from east side, with Albert Beven outside Room 7, ca. 1960s–1970s. (Photo courtesy of Fred and Pip Hughes.)

room (Room 5), which were probably cream and then light green (Figure 7). Margaret Carter remembered that the two end rooms (Rooms 9 and 10) were out of bounds and reserved for the “gentlemen when they visited”—i.e., the owners, the Hugheses (Robin Taylor 2002, pers. comm.). Peter Beven also identified these two rooms as guestrooms in his sketch plan (Figure 1). Thus, the combination of these memories, photographic evidence, and archaeological excavations gives insights into the changing domestic conditions of the homestead.

This oral research has also steered archaeological investigations of household activities at the site. Peter Beven’s plan drew attention to a small structure beside the billabong, labeled “Chinaman’s hut” (Figure 1), which was excavated in 1999 as one of the residences in the homestead complex (Allison 2002a:12, 2003:180). This hut was unoccupied in the 1940s (Peter Beven

1999, pers. comm.). However, Jim McLennan remembers an “Old Chinaman” who lived there and worked in the garden with his mother (Jim McLennan 1999, pers. comm.), and Clare Hayes was saved from drowning by the Chinese gardener in 1923 (Robin Taylor 2011, pers. comm.). Tom Kit appears in the men’s ledgers in 1927 as a gardener at Kinchega, and until 1936 at least four more Chinese names are listed in these ledgers as gardeners there. At least one of these men may have lived in this hut. There is nothing from the excavations of this building to identify the ethnicity of its occupants (Figure 8), but it is tempting to associate the lid of an opium pot with a Chinese resident (Lydon 1999:73,76).

These oral conversations have also helped to interpret excavations at the north end of the main homestead complex and guided the investigations there (Figure 9). Peter Beven stated



FIGURE 8. Excavation and finds from the “Chinaman’s Hut” (Building Y) at the Old Kinchege Homestead: (a) completion of excavation of Trench 5, (b) trouser button, (c) bronze tap, and (d) opium-pot lid. (Photos by author, 1999; drawing by M. Green, 1999.)

that his mother had added a kitchen in the north veranda in the 1940s (Figure 1). Previously, cooking for the homestead inhabitants had been done by a cook in the big kitchen block (Building B) (Allison 1998a:figure 9, 2003:figure 3). The 1999 excavations revealed this new kitchen (Room 3) (Allison 2002a:10–11). Prior to the 2000 excavations, though, the walls of only two rooms to the north had been identified. The later excavations revealed a further wall, dividing the previously designated Room 2 into Room 2 and Room 2X (Allison 2002b:7–9). The room just to the north of the new kitchen, sandwiched

between the main homestead building and the “laundry,” had a concrete floor with drain holes, and was the bathroom indicated in Peter’s plan. It does not appear in Bertha Hayes’s photograph (Figure 2).

Excavations under the veranda area in this part of the homestead, in front of the bathroom and laundry, produced children’s slate pencils and a German doll’s head, dated 1890–1910, as well as needles and transfer-printed pottery (Allison 2003:figure 9). These finds appear to have little association with an area identified by Peter Beven as a kitchen, bathroom, and

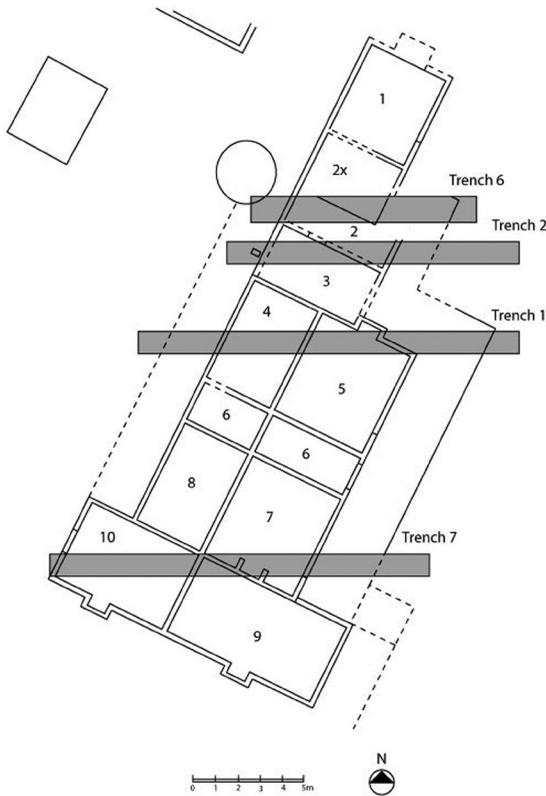


FIGURE 9. Plan of main homestead building showing excavations in 1999–2000. (Plan by Robert Pullar, 1998; adapted by Matthew Leavesley, 2002.)

laundry. Margaret Carter recalled that there was no bathroom at the homestead, but that that there had been a school (Robin Taylor 2002, pers. comm.). Chris Hughes stated that his grandfather, Harold White Hughes, had no children while resident in the homestead. Hence, there may have been no children living there after the Phillips children left in 1887 and until the Hayes children moved in in 1915. It is feasible that part, at least, of Peter Beven’s “laundry” had previously been a schoolhouse and the focus of the Hayes children’s early education. These excavations and the resulting artifact assemblages also suggest that the women of the house did their sewing and took tea on this veranda, a relatively cool place in the afternoon. The sewing pins date mainly to the late 19th century, and some of the tea wares are among the oldest datable ceramics recorded by KARP, dating between 1835 and 1870. This dating evidence, to be discussed in a forthcoming article, suggests that these sewing

and tea-drinking activities took place during the earliest occupations of the homestead. The “laundry” did not exist in 1878 (Figure 6), but the assemblage under its veranda suggests that it may have been built when either the Phillipses or H. W. Hughes lived there. The evidence for children’s schooling implies the former. Jim McLennan could remember no schooling when he lived there in the 1930s, while Peter Bevan remembers doing his lessons in the northeast corner of the main veranda.

These conversations are also ongoing. Post-excavation analyses in 2009–2010 indicate that some 40% of the ceramic remains collected by KARP consist of tea wares: cups, saucers, and teapots. They are predominantly porcelain and bone china, and include transfer-printed and gilded sets (Figure 10), variously datable from ca. 1860 to the 1950s, the occupation period for the homestead. The invoice books indicate that the estate bought gilded cups and saucers regularly from at least 1895. It has been suggested to the author that these tea sets might



a



b

FIGURE 10. Finds from the Old Kinchege Homestead dump: (a) bone-china teacup and (b) gilded and decorated bone-china saucer. (Photos by Kinchege Archaeological Research Project, 2009–2010.)

document the activities of the Country Women's Association of Australia. However, that organization was formed in 1922 and usually met in towns. The number of tea sets recorded in the excavations and surface collection at the homestead appear to document either substantial gatherings or a constant stream of passing visitors, at a time when transportation was limited and difficult, with the nearest homestead 60 km away. On reading a draft of this article, Peter Beven commented that the homestead had "lots of visitors" (Peter Beven 2011, pers. comm.), and Robin Taylor noted that her father's diary often mentioned visitors who called in at pastoral stations (Robin Taylor 2011, pers. comm.).

Some of these conversations have provided potentially misleading perspectives. Two informants have reported the presence of a cellar at the Old Kinchega Homestead, but none of KARP's site investigations has verified its existence. According to Peter Beven there was "definitely no cellar" at the homestead (Peter Beven 2002, pers. comm.). Managers' and overseers' families often lived and worked at a number of pastoral stations, so it is possible that the children confused the different homesteads they visited or occupied.

Conversely, limited memory of indigenous habitation in the area of the Old Kinchega Homestead should not be taken as evidence for a limited presence of Aboriginal people. On the contrary, the archaeological evidence indicates considerable post-contact activity of Aboriginal people in the area between the Old Kinchega Homestead and the earlier homestead (Rainbird et al. 1997:3–38; Peter Freeman 2002[1]:60,63,140,141). Paul Rainbird commented that "[t]his is not to say that such history does not exist, it may be that people were unwilling to tell me the stories or that I was not asking or looking in the right places" (Rainbird et al. 1997:53). Apart from the reports noted above, no further light has been shed on this former habitation of this area (Peter Freeman 2002[1]:appendix B).

A further example of potentially misleading information was E. G. Hughes's response, in the formal questionnaire, to a question about the diet of the homestead occupants. He wrote that "[t]hey lived on mutton, fish and eggs—seldom beef" (E. G. Hughes 1998, pers. comm.). However, KARP's excavations, particularly the

artifacts collected from the household dump, and research in the Kinchega Estate bookkeeping records have revealed a varied diet with a range of condiments and tinned salmon, sardines, and oysters. During his site visit, these artifacts reminded Peter Beven of the tinned fruit, treacle, and jam he ate as a child in the 1940s (Peter Beven 1999, pers. comm.). Indeed, the estate invoice books indicate a steady increase in consumer goods and in the variety of food, including lobster, which appeared in the invoices for September 1921. So, E. G. Hughes was no doubt correct about the diet of the early years, but not necessarily about the diet within his own memory.

### Conclusions

This article highlights the role of memory in an archaeology of the recent past and outlines processes used to tap into that memory. The principal concern of the project is the relationship of these personal memories to the household use of space and consumption practices of people, mainly of British origin, in this remote region. The project's research data comprise excavation reports, artifact analyses, archival records, and oral histories. Gathering the latter involved talking with and writing to different people, having cups of tea and cans (or glasses) of beer with them, eating meals together, and sharing accommodation. These initial and informal interactions identified informants who were sometimes more formally interviewed, but they also stimulated further archaeological questions and archival research themselves that, in turn, stimulated further informal conversations. The web of memories and accompanying documentary records has developed a context around the material evidence. In turn, the discovery of material evidence has stimulated more memories and inspired community members to consider these material aspects of their histories. This is the nature of community-based archaeology. This process has often been fairly unstructured and included data collection and analytical input from participating community members.

While collecting this oral information the author noted that the community participants were often more concerned with social interactions than the material conditions of their pasts. That is, their personal recollections more generally

concerned people, rather than their “everyday” interactions with the material world. Oral research invariably relies on recollections of childhood, and, in this case, the interests of children tend to be focused on their play and education, and on the people most closely associated with them, rather than on their own domestic condition. As a result, some of the initial questions put to informants stimulated only limited information on the materiality of domestic practice, often seen by these informants as unremarkable. The visual material, such as Peter Beven’s sketch map (Figure 1) and Bertha Hayes’s photograph (Figure 2), nevertheless, provided invaluable frameworks for study and important prompts for the informants to recall this physical space and material memories of it.

Beck and Somerville (2005:471) referred to the “interdisciplinarity” of research involving archaeological and oral history, and stressed the poor integration of local community knowledge in past research in Australia. La Salle (2010:410,412) has further argued that much so-called community-based or collaborative archaeology continues to be one-sided, with academic researchers, like corporate executives, exploiting their employees and their consumers (the local community) in the interests of shareholders (universities and funding bodies). Similarly, Waterton and Smith (2010:7) argued that many projects tend to involve things that are done for communities rather than with them.

Since 1998, when KARP focused on the household archaeology of the homestead, there has been no further funding for community collaboration and only a limited, and targeted, approach to engaging with community participants of European background, and little resulting collaboration with indigenous community members. The members of the “local community” or, rather, of the network of informants that has been involved in the oral history of the homestead, are those who are best placed to report on the household consumption practices, and who have been willing to share their memories with KARP.

These memories have been gathered in an often rather “ad hoc” manner. Family members have offered themselves as intermediaries, forwarding set questionnaires and interim reports to their relatives, processing the responses, and returning the results to the author. They are involved in the production and the consumption

of this information, and add a type of cohesion and intimacy that transcends the vast distances involved (Symonds 2004:38–45). While the project’s focus is on archaeological fieldwork, these distances and the nature of the funding have meant that generally such interactions have not been located at the specific place in question—the Old Kinchega Homestead. The resulting iterative process has, therefore, led to memories that have been stimulated by a two-way flow of information and analyses between the informants and KARP’s archaeological and archival research.

This approach has produced a web of information, some of which is relevant to the research aims of the project and some not. The formal questionnaires, formulated at the outset of this part of the project, did not produce this type of information and collaboration on their own. Indeed, given the distances and the types of people and communities involved, it has not always been practical to use the questionnaires in actual interview situations. And, rather than signing a consent at the initial stages of this oral research, consent has been sought and granted, on an individual basis, as part of the conversation process, the dissemination and publication process, and as required by the various institutions concerned. The people involved have also taken part in the correcting and editing process, where they have provided further information and offered enthusiastic support for the project, contributing a “de-institutionalizing pattern of cultural participation” (Waterton and Smith 2010:12). Through this process, unfortunately, it has not so far been possible to involve descendants of other occupants of the homestead and surrounding area; neither the staff (Chinese, European, or Aboriginal) nor other indigenous people whose camps have been identified nearby. Perhaps a more structured and more consciously collaborative approach, from the outset, would have achieved this. If, with hindsight, the oral history and community consultation for KARP might be started anew, there are many things that might be tackled differently. The information gathered has not always been ideal, but it has produced many surprises and unforeseen insights, and resulted in a wealth of information relevant to the specific aims of this project.

Since 1998, KARP has had to limit its research agenda. There have been calls, outside academia, for KARP to extend this agenda again to

investigate other aspects of Kinchega National Park (Peter Freeman 2000[2]:26,36–37). A descendant of a former owner of Kinchega Station, prior to the Hugheses, has also asked KARP for information on the descendant's own family history. KARP's research aims are not structured, or funded, to deal with these broader questions. Rather, the role of this project is to inform, to stimulate, and to assist others—"citizen researchers," other university-based researchers, heritage managers and consultants, and any interested stakeholders—to carry out such further research. It is hoped that plans to make the research resources from KARP freely accessible through NSW Archaeology Online, <<http://www.nswaol.library.usyd.edu.au>>, will contribute to these objectives.

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