

PROFESSOR JOHN MULVANEY, AO CMG

John Mulvaney is an acknowledged world-leader in the field of hunter-gatherer archaeology, specifically Australian Prehistory, which is best reflected in his magisterial survey *Prehistory of Australia*, now in its third edition. His accolades and honours are many, but perhaps among the most telling in terms of the impact his work has had is the invitation extended to him by the prestigious British journal *Antiquity* to write a retrospective essay some 20 years ago. Only ten such retrospective essays by senior archaeologists from around the world were published, and are now collected together, with an early essay by V. G. Childe, in *The Pastmasters: Eleven Modern Pioneers of Archaeology*. Not only did John Mulvaney introduce, through this university, Australian prehistory to the tertiary teaching curriculum, but also, in the 1960s, he completely changed the way archaeological fieldwork was practiced in this country.

Having completed an MA degree in the Department of History on the economy of Belgic Britain in 1951, John Mulvaney continued his training abroad, at Cambridge, from 1951 to 1953. This period proved to be of immense benefit for the development of archaeology in this country. In those days, nobody in Australia who held a university or museum appointment had been formally trained in the archaeology of hunter-gatherer communities. At Cambridge, a leading centre of prehistory in hunter-gatherer subsistence patterns, Mulvaney was influenced by many archaeologists, including C. M. B. McBurney, with whom he worked at Haua Fteah, a Stone Age site in Libya, in 1952. The Haua Fteah excavations made a lasting impression on the younger prehistorians through the application of a wide range of new scientific techniques and disciplined research. For Mulvaney, eager to return to Australia and utilize his newly gained skills, this period at Cambridge generally, and at Haua Fteah in particular, was immensely rewarding.

On returning to Melbourne in 1954, Mulvaney introduced Pacific Prehistory into the curriculum and initiated a series of archaeological campaigns that were to change the whole discipline of hunter-gatherer archaeology in this country forever more. He led a team to Fromm's Landing on the Lower Murray River, South Australia (January 1956), followed by an archaeological survey of the Lower Glenelg River, excavations at Glen Aire, and expeditions to Kenniff Cave and The Tombs, major galleries of stencil-form art in the Chesterton and Carnavon Ranges, Queensland. These projects were nothing short of epoch making, for despite the energetic activities of museum personnel and stone tool collectors, they represent the first systematic projects by a researcher trained in archaeological techniques. Mulvaney implemented principles modern archaeology now takes for granted.

John Mulvaney left Melbourne at the end of 1964 to take up a Senior Fellowship in Prehistory in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the ANU and, in 1971, was offered the Foundation Chair in Prehistory at the same institution. The 1960s and 1970s were the halcyon days of the fledgling discipline of Australian prehistory and John Mulvaney assumed leadership in the field and trained a new generation of archaeologists. In collaboration with colleagues at the ANU and elsewhere, many discoveries of world significance soon followed, among them the famous Pleistocene Mungo burials in the Willandra Lakes system of NSW, discovered by Jim Bowler, a Melbourne University geomorphologist, that is now on the World Heritage list.

In addition to teaching and research, John Mulvaney was involved from the outset with the relatively new field of cultural heritage management. Between 1964 and 1986, except for two years, he was an elected Council member of the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS), during which time he became deeply involved in government legislation to protect Aboriginal sites. Among his most influential activities were those responsible for protecting Kakadu Park (Arnhem Land) from uranium mining and for saving the Franklin River region (SW Tasmania) from inundation. Both areas are on the World Heritage listing. He was a member of the Pigott Inquiry on Museums and National Collections (1974-5) and served a six year term on the Australian Heritage Commission.

There is no doubt whatsoever that John Mulvaney is one of our great Australians. A pioneer archaeologist of the modern era, he has left an indelible mark both in this country and internationally through his numerous influential publications, his innovative teaching and his public debates.