Secret Lives, Forgotten Stories: Highlights from Heritage Victoria’s Archaeological Collection

16 April–12 October 2014

Archaeological artefacts from eight of Victoria’s oldest historic sites will be showcased for the first time at the Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 16 April – 12 October 2014.

The exhibition will include more than 70 archaeological artefacts from Heritage Victoria’s collection including 200 year-old objects from the failed convict settlement at Sorrento, a pistol from the site of the Eureka Rebellion, and burial boxes from the mass grave at Pentridge Prison where Ned Kelly was re-buried.

The collection traces Victoria’s settlement and growth from convict times, through the years of the whaling industry and the Goldrush, up to the birth of Marvellous Melbourne.

The artefacts also tell the stories of forgotten Victorians: People such as the Chinese in the goldfields and impoverished workers in early Melbourne, who have not left their mark on traditional histories but whose lives are reflected in the trinkets and treasures that are left behind.

Curator, Dr Andrew Jamieson, says the exhibition represents a ‘coming of age’ of historical archaeology in Victoria. Never before has it been possible to see the state’s history so richly presented through the lens of archaeology.

“Excavations in Victoria over the past 20 years have uncovered significant archaeological remains and relics. Many of the artefacts in the exhibition have never been displayed publicly before.

“For the first time it is now possible to see the evolving story of Victoria’s 19th Century settlement and development reflected in its archaeology,” Dr Jamieson said.

The exhibition highlights the history of archaeology in the state, revealing the discoveries of archaeologists and the contributions they have made to our understanding of Victoria’s past.

The collection also has a maritime theme, featuring artefacts recovered from two important shipwrecks, the Cheviot and the SS City of Launceston.
“The exhibition represents a very exciting and important opportunity to collaborate with Heritage Victoria (and the Heritage Council) in telling the story of the settlement and growth of Victoria through these unique objects,” Dr Jamieson said.

Glass wine bottle with encrusted oyster shells
England, c. 19th century (c. 1860s), Excavated SS City of Launceston, Collection of Heritage Victoria

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FREE PUBLIC FLOOR TALKS @ THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART

Public floor talk by Dr Andrew Jamieson, Curator, Classics & Archaeology, University of Melbourne
- Wednesday 30 April 1-1.30pm

Public floor talk, ‘Good Taste, Fashion, Gentility: a genteel Melbourne family and their rubbish’, on Viewbank Homestead, Heidelberg by Dr Sarah Hayes, ARC Post-doctoral Fellow, Department of Archaeology, Environment and Community Planning, La Trobe University - Saturday 3 May 2-2.30pm

Public floor talk, ‘Needlework and child’s play’ on Cohen Place, Melbourne by Sarah Myers, Director, ArchLink - Wednesday 21 May 1-1.30pm

Public floor talk, ‘Presumed Ned: the discovery of the lost Pentridge burials’, by Jeremy Smith, Senior Archaeologist, Heritage Victoria - Saturday 24 May 2-3pm

Public floor talk, ‘The secret artefacts collection: Heritage Victoria’s role in preserving the state’s historical archaeology’ by Susannah Collis and Annie Muir, Curators, Heritage Victoria - Wednesday 18 June 1-1.30pm

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Images available upon request and interview with curator Dr Andrew Jamieson
The Ian Potter Museum of Art The University of Melbourne, Swanston Street, Parkville (between Elgin & Faraday sts) T: 03 8344 5148 W: www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au
Tues to Fri 10am - 5pm: Sat and Sun 12 - 5pm