

Preface

The impetus for this volume is the pending retirement of Professor Atholl Anderson from the Department of Archaeology and Natural History in the Australian National University in June 2008, after a distinguished and brilliant career in academic archaeology. In geographic range, Atholl's field research has extended over large swathes of the Pacific Ocean, from the west coast of South America to Western Micronesia, to Island Southeast Asia, and west to the Indian Ocean. Few prehistorians of Oceania have seen as much of their subject matter at such close quarters. The variety and span of his study areas are matched, and quite possibly exceeded, by the prodigious variety of subjects he has tackled in numerous scientific publications, which are outlined by Foss Leach in Chapter 1.

As a colleague, mentor and friend to fellow archaeologists, Atholl has been hugely influential in the development of archaeology in Australasia and further afield, and his intense interest in prehistory has been propelled by both a love of history and a desire to see the past with fresh eyes – even if that means upsetting long-established and often cherished conceptual frameworks in the process. This bent for revisionism aimed squarely at improving the historical realism of the discipline has led him to engage with new scientific techniques and theoretical orientations, along with instituting field projects in remote places to recover the essential data. Such an unusually high level of intellectual enthusiasm recalls Samuel Johnson's comment about the prolific Edmund Burke that: 'His stream of mind is perpetual', and throughout his career, numerous prehistorians have benefited from Atholl's generous sharing of ideas, information and contacts.

In putting together this volume, our aim was to honour Atholl's contribution to archaeology by soliciting papers on subjects which have been at the core of his research endeavours over several decades. The title *Islands of Inquiry: Colonisation, seafaring and the archaeology of maritime landscapes* reflects Atholl's abiding intellectual interest and fascination with the way people reached, occupied and transformed diverse, and often extreme, insular environments. Both 'colonisation' and 'seafaring' are well-established themes in island archaeology, but the concept of 'maritime landscapes' might at first glance appear incongruous. However, island peoples, in the past as well as in the present, have a strong and visceral connection with the seas and oceans in which they live. Maritime influences, whether they be situated in subsistence, trade or ritual domains, permeate the social life of island communities, and are amenable to archaeological study. Thus, a major aim of the volume is to highlight the importance of an archaeologically informed history of landmasses in the oceans and seas of the world.

Contributors were asked to write on a relevant theme, and to eschew valediction and sentiment in favour of scholarly writing. All papers were refereed and we are grateful to the authors for their participation, and the referees and the manuscript reader, Professor Tim Murray. We also thank Lorena Kanellopoulos, Duncan Beard, Laticia Wedhorn and Rachel Lawson for their generous help with volume production. Publication was possible with financial assistance from the Department of Archaeology and Natural History and the College of Asia and the Pacific (ANU).

Geoffrey Clark, Foss Leach and Sue O'Connor