

A PRECIOUS DAY OFF IN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

[July 4, 2012 Jacq Matthews Day of Archaeology 2012, Excavation Archaeology, Australia, Australian Archaeological Association, Excavation, Northern Territory](#)

A quite belated Day of Archaeology post since I'm in the field at the moment and am quite restricted for time, which is basically what this post will be about.

I'm an honours student in archaeology at the University of Queensland and for the past month I have been volunteering on archaeological excavations across Arnhem Land in the north of Australia. When I'm not being a student and volunteering on digs I'm also the Membership Secretary for the Australian Archaeological Association (AAA).

Currently I'm working with a fabulous multi-disciplinary team on the re-excavation of Malakunanja II, which is in Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory, Australia. This is a key site in Australian archaeology due to its early age and potential to improve what we currently know about the early occupation of Australia. Due to agreements made with the Traditional Owners of this area I cannot post details on what we're doing at the site, so it is quite fortuitous for me that the 29th falls on a day off for us and the first one I've had since arriving in the Northern Territory.

On this Day of Archaeology I am busy catching up on my work for the AAA, which is run exclusively by a small number of volunteers who keep the Association running and continually improving. Even though I have internet access of an evening finding the time to attend my AAA responsibilities (as well as my own research!) after a full day of excavation (7am-6pm in the field) is near impossible. So this precious day off is being filled with yet more work.

As the Membership Secretary for AAA my main responsibility is to manage our membership base, e.g. making sure memberships are processed correctly, updating member details, providing access to the member only pages of the website. I've spent most of the

29th working on AAA's new website and sending out individual login details to our members. This has essentially meant sitting at my computer all day and sending practically the same email to AAA's 800+ current members.

My main reason for devoting my day off to such a tedious job is not just out of a sense of responsibility, but also out of genuine affection for the Association and the work that it does in the Australian archaeological community. Whilst the responsibility of being an executive member of AAA can be overwhelming and time consuming, it is extremely rewarding and has provided me with an incredible number of unique opportunities. So I should probably consider myself lucky to have it taking up my first day off in a month.

Ultimately time is precious to archaeologists in more ways than one. I think this is a valuable lesson to learn as a student, and balancing competing responsibilities and demands on my time is something that I will likely spend the rest of my career working on.

We're returning to excavation tomorrow with the privilege of starting work at 7am! You'll be able to follow some of our progress by following me on twitter, @archaeo_jacq.

Jacq



Some of the beautiful scenery I've been lucky enough to experience whilst doing fieldwork in Arnhem Land for the past month.