INSIGHTS INTO PREHISTORIC WOODWORKING TECHNIQUES & TOOLS
CAS SEMINAR SERIES

PRESENTER: LUC BORDES, CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCE, UOW

SEMINAR: INSIGHTS INTO PREHISTORIC WOODWORKING TECHNIQUES & TOOLS: ANALYTICAL METHODS TO STUDY WOODEN ARTEFACTS & RESIDUES ON TOOL EDGES

DATE: THURSDAY 27 AUGUST
TIME: 1.30PM – 2.30PM
VENUE: 41.153, UOW
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

ABSTRACT

Prehistoric times are often named “stone age”. However, it’s very likely that wood was a fundamental material part of these ancient cultures, which has not been preserved, often leaving just the stones. Early prehistoric woodworking is indicated by rare archaeological discoveries of wooden objects and also by rock art images. Ethnography also brings us a lot of reliable information about this technology. Different woodworking processes or phases will be presented: locating the raw material, extracting it, coarse wood removal, fine shaping, grinding etc. The importance of fire as the main woodworking tool for some of these steps will be stressed. Choice of stone tools used to make a wooden implement is dependent on these steps and limited by the stone and hafting technology available. The whole woodworking process tends towards minimising the working energy.

For study of rare prehistoric wooden artefacts or more recent well-preserved ethnographic objects, a wide range of analytical techniques can be applied with maximum information. On the other hand, microscopic wood residues attached to stone tool edges (perhaps the only surviving traces of wood from older periods), can be studied only by a more limited range of techniques. What techniques are available and appropriate to study key aspects of ancient woodworking such as selection of wood species, the kind of wooden material, the part of the tree or woody plant used, and its strength or density?

ABOUT LUC BORDES

Luc Bordes is a PhD student, recently enrolled in the Centre for Archaeological Science, School of Earth and Environmental, University of Wollongong. Luc has degrees from the University of Provence, Marseille, in Physical Sciences and in Molecular Organics and Physical Chemistry. He has worked previously for twelve years with the National Scientific Research Centre (CNRS) in France, as an assistant engineer to maintain a spectroscopy instrument centre in a biophysics lab. After also obtaining a Masters in Prehistory last year, he has a growing interest in research for analysing archaeological artefacts and organic residues attached to them, especially wooden residues. As an independent researcher, he has done woodworking experimentation since 2005, along with study of ethnographic collections in Europe and Australia, mainly focused on throwing stick technology.

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