

AIMA Newsletter

Vol 41 Issue 1 April 2026



John McCarthy Flinders University

Murujuga Rangers preparing for underwater archaeological survey work (photo courtesy of John McCarthy)



A Note from the President's Desk...

Hello members,

This is my first note since taking up the Presidency of AIMA from my fantastic predecessor Dani Wilkinson. Dani has helmed AIMA for four years, since 2022 with passion, enthusiasm and an incredible amount of hard work. Her accomplishments are enormous. Under her presidency, the organisation navigated the emergence from the disruption of COVID-19 while also celebrating AIMA's 40th anniversary. Dani oversaw the restoration of the Journal to regular annual publication, re-established national and New Zealand training courses with updated teaching materials, and sustained member engagement through the newsletter and the introduction of monthly online meetings with guest presentations and workshops. Externally, she led a renewed international and collaborative profile by delivering the first overseas conference in two decades, securing strong representation at a major world archaeological congress, and initiating joint conferences with key partner institutions.

Internally, she strengthened governance and strategic direction through the organisation's first *Strategic Plan* and the revision of its *Code of Ethics* and *Roles and Responsibilities* documents. Her term was also marked by sustained advocacy on regulation and protection of underwater cultural heritage, support for innovative projects through scholarships, and an enhanced public presence through new promotional materials. Dani continues to support AIMA as website administrator and has already fixed some long-term issues! On behalf of the whole AIMA community, we thank her for her dedication and leadership.

I take up this role after supporting AIMA in previous years as Assistant Editor of the AIMA journal and then as Vice President. My goals in this position are to continue the momentum that Dani built up and to position our organisation as the peak body for maritime archaeology in Australasia. As a Senior Lecturer in Maritime Archaeology in the Flinders University Maritime Archaeology Program, I bring an academic perspective to AIMA and will continue working towards the indexing of the journal so that it continues to attract significant academic research. This will help AIMA as an organisation to remain relevant to the highest level of university research. At the same time, I know that the future of AIMA rests on the avocational community and I will prioritise initiatives that engage with and that come from those members. With the help of our committee and our members, we are hoping to increase the number of local events with both talks on archaeology and training events. We had a very successful joint conference with the Australian Archaeology Association in Fremantle in December but will balance the cost and academic focus of that event with a return to our own low-cost conference format this year, and a special focus on the avocational community.

We have had a near-complete change in our executive at the last AGM and as with any regime change it takes time for everyone to learn the ropes. After the Christmas break and all its disruption, we are really starting to get stuck in and we have several new AIMA executive members ready to bring their energy to the organisation. This year should be full of interest and will see the 25th anniversary of the UNESCO 2001 Convention, as well as the first International Day for Underwater Cultural Heritage on the 21st of August. AIMA has many exciting events and projects in the pipeline for the next year and beyond, including the next AIMA conference, a joint project on harbours with the Nautical Archaeology Society, and a series of new initiatives that will support the discipline across all of Australasia, reflecting AIMA's discipline-wide remit across maritime archaeology. Watch this space!

John McCarthy
AIMA President

Introduction to New AIMA Executive and Council Members

I am delighted to welcome a new AIMA Executive and Council who will lead the organisation into 2026 and beyond! While it was bittersweet to step down as President, I was glad to be handing the reins over to a team with fresh ideas, new goals, and a diverse mix of skills and energy. I'm excited to see what they achieve in the years ahead.

Incoming President – *John McCarthy*

John is a Senior Lecturer in the Flinders University Maritime Archaeology Program, where he previously completed his PhD. His overseas experience and knowledge of 3D methods, shipwreck analysis, submerged landscape archaeology and community engagement gives him a broad understanding of the discipline. John held the Vice President position last year, and before that, on Council, assisting on the editorial committee of the *Australasian Journal for Maritime Archaeology* (AJMA).

John's goals for AIMA are to raise the profile and activities of AIMA as the peak body for our discipline, and to support our editorial team to boost the readership and prestige of our long-established publications. John wants to see AIMA grow, modernise, and become a more visible organisation benefitting AIMA members and the wider discipline.

Continuing Senior Vice President – *Justine Buchler*

Justine is a veteran of the Executive. She has spent 5 years in the roles of Vice President and Senior Vice President and was a strong support during my Presidency. Previously, she was part of re-establishing the AIMA Newsletter as an Editor, helped with Social Media, and has been on Council. Justine offers the Executive security and continuity with a change of President, able to support John in his first year and provide background to many AIMA matters. Now that AIMA has recovered and is back on its feet, Justine wants to see AIMA reach new heights and strengths, particularly in terms of supporting students and international members.

Incoming Secretary – *Pauline Ramsey*

A new face within the Executive, Pauline impressed everyone with her thorough and well-considered nomination. Pauline is a current MMA student at Flinders University and she brings with her consulting experience from Australia and Canada. She has energy, she has spunk, she has drive and attention to detail. What more could you want from a new Secretary?

Continuing Treasurer – *Chelsea Wiseman*

Chelsea is the quiet achiever of the Executive. Being Treasurer is a demanding role with often very convoluted problems that should be much simpler to solve (Westpac continues to be a Minotaur's maze to deal with). Chelsea is also strongly connected with Flinders as a no-nonsense doer, and she brings that capable and reliable energy to the Executive. Chelsea was Treasurer last year, and has previously been Secretary, so she is very familiar with the behind-the-scenes admin work and where to find the grease that keeps the wheels of AIMA rolling.

Incoming Vice President – *Peter Harvey*

He said he was retiring, but he's now busier than ever! Pete has over three decades of experience working as a regulator in Victoria, an equally long involvement with AIMA, and has spent his 'retirement' years working as a consultant. Recently, Pete has been on the AIMA Council and part of the editorial committee for AJMA, and he is also on the Conference Committee this year. He remembers the earlier days of AIMA, what we achieved and the potential we had. Pete wants to bring that back and reinstate AIMA as a leader and authority in Australasia. Pete also strongly supports

student and international involvement with AIMA, and he puts his money where his mouth is (literally, by sponsoring bursaries) to help make that happen. He brings the Executive a get-the-job-done attitude, alongside a kind generosity that has supported students and maritime archaeologists for decades.

Continuing Vice President – open

In April 2026 Jane Mitchell had to step down from the role of VP due to work and other commitments. The AIMA executive will circulate alternative candidates to the Council shortly to appoint a replacement. Expressions of interest can be sent to president@aima-underwater.org.au

Council

Our wonderful Council members are too numerous to introduce individually, but here's a quick break-down of the members for 2025-26.

Brand new: Ben Wharton – with a mix of maritime archaeological experience from consultancy to ship interpretation, we're glad to welcome Ben to the AIMA team!

Glad to have them back: Jim Stedman – bringing a background in consultancy and now at the Western Australian Museum, Jim continues to be a quiet achiever and pillar for maritime archaeology.

The usual suspects (for doing good work): Patrick Morrison, Vicki Richards, Jo Edney, Mark Polzer, Liam Norris, Mick de Reyter, Natali Pearson, Chris Lewczak, Gay Lacsina

Addicted ex-Executive: Deb Shefi, Michael O'Donnell, Toni Massey, Katie Woo, Celeste Jordan, Wendy van Duivenvoorde, Peta Straiton, Maddy McAllister

Along with our other wonderful administrative positions, these people deserve recognition for generously giving their time, energy (and a little sanity) to AIMA. Achieving our annual goals, and strengthening the organisation over the long term, takes sustained effort from many committed volunteers. I can attest that it is a hard slog behind the scenes of AIMA that often involves a thankless, joyless, never-ending list of tasks. It is rarely glamorous but always essential. I encourage everyone to support this new team, whether that's by contributing a newsletter article, showing up to AHOY meetings, lending a hand with a task or simply sending a message of encouragement!

Congratulations to all who have stepped up for AIMA. I'm excited to see where we go next.

Danielle Wilkinson
Outgoing AIMA President

Save the Date – AIMA 2026 Conference

The Conference Committee for 2026 are pleased to share the theme, date and venue of the next AIMA Conference!

The 2026 conference will be held in Geelong, Victoria, across the weekend of the 19-20th of September. Side events, including the Welcome event on Friday 18th September, are still being confirmed.

This year's conference will focus on volunteers who have contributed to maritime archaeology over the decades, and we strongly encourage maritime archaeology enthusiasts and non-professionals to attend and be part of the proceedings.

To whet your appetite, the conference theme and abstract are below.

For the Love of It: Celebrating Avocational Contributions to Maritime Archaeology

Across the world many individuals share a deep passion for maritime archaeology and underwater cultural heritage. We are captivated by shipwrecks, by maritime histories, and the sites and artefacts that now rest beneath the water's surface. While a small number pursue maritime archaeology as a profession, it is those who engage in this study "for the love of it" who form the true backbone of maritime archaeology.

We welcome you to Victoria where passionate members of the public have long been at the forefront of maritime archaeological fieldwork, monitoring, searching, research, education, advocacy and museum management. From groups such as the Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria and Amazon 1863 Project Inc, to many maritime museums assisted by volunteers, and to dedicated individuals such as Jack Loney, Terry Arnott and Don Love. Passionate Victorians have played an invaluable role in establishing legislation and the political will to advance maritime archaeology across the State, as have similar groups and individuals throughout Australasia.

However, keeping these community-driven efforts alive is not without immense challenges. Funding, insurance, online platforms, health and safety regulations, and even difficulties in engaging new audiences, all threaten to sink volunteers and volunteer organisations. What keeps us afloat is a shared passion, a common purpose, and the strength of community support.

This conference celebrates the avocational groups and individuals who have contributed and are contributing to the research, protection and preservation of maritime and underwater cultural heritage – divers monitoring sites, passionate avocational groups, researchers and surveyors who devote endless hours, museum volunteers who bring stories to life. Without them, we literally would not be here (and not only because AIMA and this conference is run by volunteers too)!

In particular, we invite volunteers, and all others with a passion for maritime archaeology and heritage, to share their projects, achievements and challenges. We also encourage deeper conversations about the future: How we can better support avocational efforts? What is the evolving role of volunteers in maritime archaeology? What new opportunities can be created to support their continued and meaningful involvement?

Join us in Geelong to celebrate and strengthen the diverse community of people united by their love for maritime and underwater cultural heritage.

Upcoming Events in 2026

Date	Upcoming Events 2026
17-23 May 2026	National Archaeology Week
15-23 August 2026	National Science Week
18-20 September 2026	AIMA Conference
23-25 September 2026	NASC National Archaeology Student Conference
26-31 October 2026	Asia Pacific Conference on Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage

2026 AIMA Conference – Call for Sessions

The call for session abstracts is open for the 2026 AIMA Conference in Geelong!

Session organisers should provide a proposal with:

- a session title
- an abstract (up to 300 words)
- suggested format for the session
- the names and affiliations of session chairs, and which chair(s) plan to attend in person.

We wish to encourage a variety of formats including normal sessions, rapid fire sessions, workshops, panel discussions, demonstrations, poster sessions or other approaches.

Session abstracts are to be submitted to conference@aima-underwater.org.au by Sunday 19 April 2026. Further information can be found on the website at <https://www.aima-underwater.org.au/app/events/events/view?event=aima-conference-2026#call-for-sessions>

2026 NASC – Call for Abstracts

The National Archaeology Student Conference (NASC) organising committee would like to share that NASC will return from 23 - 25 September 2026 in Brisbane, Australia. This year's conference will be hosted at The University of Queensland's St Lucia campus.

NASC is a student-led initiative that provides a welcoming forum for emerging archaeologists to present their research, exchange ideas, and network with fellow students and industry professionals.

We have just opened our Call for Abstracts, which you can find attached or on our website at <https://www.nationalarchaeologystudentconferenceaustralia.com/present>. We welcome presentation and poster abstract submissions from undergraduate, honours, masters, and PhD students, as well as recent graduates and early career researchers (in archaeology and related fields).

AJMA Call for Papers

The Call for Papers is open for Volume 50 (2026) of the *Australasian Journal of Maritime Archaeology*! Please contact the Journal Editor Jeremy Green on publications@aima-underwater.org.au if you are intending to submit or with any questions. Information is available on the [AJMA](#) page of the AIMA website.

Please also read the AJMA [Author Guidelines](#) and AIMA's [Code of Ethics](#) prior to submitting.

The cut-off date for each volume is 30th of September, but submissions are encouraged throughout the year. Any papers submitted after September will contribute to the next volume.

AHOY Meetings and AIMA Workshops

The AHOY meetings and AIMA workshops will be offered sporadically in 2026. Zoom links are sent to current paid members in advance of each meeting or workshop, although non-members are welcome to extend an invitation.

The 2026 AHOY meeting and AIMA workshop schedule is below with details to be added on the website as they are confirmed:

- **28 April**
AHOY with guest speaker Dr Liesel Gentelli who will be presenting "XRF compositional analysis on silver coins from the wreck of the HMS Feversham (1711)"
- **12 May**
Workshop by Natali Pearson on "Crafting a great conference abstract" ahead of the Call for Papers deadline on 31 May for the AIMA Conference.
- **30 June**
Workshop by the Conference Committee on "What to expect at an AIMA conference" targeted at paper authors who are new to this event
- **TBD**
Workshop by Celeste Jordan on "Tips and tricks for a great AIMA Scholarship application"
- **Mid-July to Mid-August**
Workshop "Paper Previews" for new conference paper authors to practice their papers to a small, friendly, constructive audience. Dates TBC
- **25 August**
AHOY with guest speaker TBC
- **15 December**
AHOY with guest speaker TBC

The agenda for each AHOY meeting is as follows (times in AEST/AEDT):

- 6:30-7:00pm - General chat
- 7:00-7:30pm - AIMA updates and discussion
- 7:30pm-onwards - Guest speaker or workshop

AHOY Lecture: 28th of April 2026

***XRF compositional analysis on silver coins from the wreck
of the HMS Feversham (1711)***

Presenter: Dr Liesel Gentelli



The HMS *Feversham* was an English ship wrecked in 1711 off the coast of Cape Breton, Canada, en route to join the attack on Quebec. Despite several contemporary salvage attempts, the wreck was not located until 1984, with a rare “merchant’s hoard” of silver coins. The present research takes p-XRF compositional data from three, two-reale pieces from the Feversham wreck, and compares them to three contemporary Mexican two-reale pieces.

This research aims to determine the compositional differences between similar coins that have been corroded in seawater and those that have not, and to understand the implications of these differences on further research.

Report: Flinders University Maritime Archaeology Field School 2025

John McCarthy, Lecturer in Maritime Archaeology, Flinders University

Flinders University's Maritime Archaeology field school attracts would-be maritime archaeologists from all over the world. We report on last year's field school, held in Murujuga, Western Australia.



Murujuga Rangers preparing for underwater archaeological survey work.

In mid-2025, Murujuga Elders and Rangers joined staff and students from Flinders University for an underwater archaeology field school on Sea Country. The work formed part of a longer-term research program supported by the Australian Research Council and developed in partnership with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC).

The field school brought together three overlapping viewpoints: those of Murujuga Rangers and Elders as custodians of Sea Country, students and researchers learning how to document submerged cultural landscapes, and a wider public interest in how Indigenous knowledge and underwater archaeology can intersect.

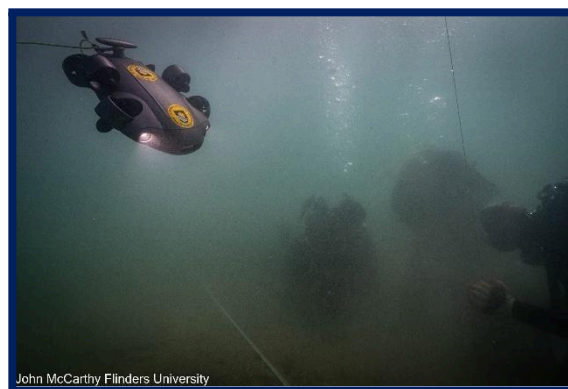
In the lead up to the field school, seven Murujuga Rangers had gained SCUBA qualifications over the course of 18 months, squeezing in dives as their other work allowed. This allowed the Rangers to reach a level of experience sufficient to take a full part in underwater archaeological survey work.

For students, the field school provided practical experience in locating and mapping submerged landscapes — an area that remains relatively new in Australian archaeology. Working alongside Rangers meant that technical training was accompanied by discussion about cultural responsibilities and local knowledge of place.



Ranger Caleb Pitt-Cooke and Flinders student Jordan Turner.

A further dimension of the project was the involvement of Murujuga Elders through a remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) controlled using a virtual-reality headset. This system allowed Elders to view and guide inspections of the seabed in real time without needing to dive.



Elders guiding the inspection of the seabed using the VR-controlled ROV.

This approach allowed cultural authority to be present during underwater work and enabled immediate discussion about what was being seen. It also raised practical questions about how new technologies might support Sea Country governance by making underwater environments more accessible to non-divers. While media coverage tends to focus on “firsts”, from within the project the emphasis was more on process: the time required for training, the value of being on Country together, and the importance of making space for different kinds of knowledge in underwater work.

The Murujuga field school offers a case study in how maritime archaeology can be carried out in partnership with Traditional Owners. It shows that underwater research can accommodate Indigenous leadership, training pathways, and emerging technologies.

It also highlights the practical realities of collaboration: long lead-in times, the need for sustained funding, and the importance of building trust before fieldwork begins.

Acknowledgements

The Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, their Circle of Elders and Rangers are acknowledged for their partnership in this work. Acknowledgement is also due to Professor Jonathan Benjamin of Flinders University and the Australian Research Council for their support.

Training was supported through ARC grants (DE220100550; extended by FT230100462). Support was also provided by the Western Australian Museum (Ross Anderson and Deb Shefi) as well as Professor Geoff Bailey from the University of York.



Murujuga Rangers and Elders with Flinders University staff and students at the conclusion of the 2025 field school

The 2025 AIMA Scholarships

Amir Saifuddin

Project Title: *Charting Temporality and Connectivity: A Polygon Spatial Modelling and Network Analysis Study of Southeast Asian Ceramics From Shipwreck Assemblages*

Results: Funded - \$3,000

Dwi Kurnia Sandy

Project Title: *Maritime Heritage and Food Security: The Role of Stone Tidal Fish Weirs in the Fisheries Ecosystem of Small Islands in The Northern Java Sea*

Results: Funded - \$3000

The 2025 Scholarship applications were exciting to read. Not only were the majority of applicants' students but most were proposing projects on overseas sites. The 2025 Scholarship Committee decided to evenly split the \$6,000 funding between two projects; Amir Saifuddin's project entitled "Charting Temporality and Connectivity: A Polygon Spatial Modelling and Network Analysis Study of Southeast Asian Ceramics From Shipwreck Assemblages" and Dwi Kurnia Sandy's project entitled "Maritime Heritage and Food Security: The Role of Stone Tidal Fish Weirs in the Fisheries Ecosystem of Small Islands in The Northern Java Sea".

Amir Saifuddin plans to apply digital and spatial approaches (polygon special modelling, social network analysis and photogrammetry) to the study of Southeast Asian shipwreck ceramic assemblages, with the aim of reconstructing maritime mobility in the region between 1350 - 1550 CE. This period, shaped by the Imperial Ming trade restrictions from 1361 to 1567, witnessed dramatic shifts in trade ceramic exchanges as visible in multiple shipwreck assemblages during the period. Although these shipwrecks and their assemblages have been investigated and published throughout the years, they remain inadequately analysed, especially in terms of trade connections and temporal shifts that influenced their cargo patterns. In particular, there is a minimal use of spatial and network analysis approaches to investigate how wrecks and their cargo assemblages connect with each other. This means that the larger story of regional connectivity during the Ming restriction is not well understood.

Dwi Kurnia Sandy aims to investigate the role of stone tidal fish weirs in the northern Java Sea islands and their contribution to past food security. Among the world's oldest fishing technologies, these structures were vital to coastal communities, serving both subsistence and trade, and are closely tied to Austronesian migration and cultural exchange. Documented examples on Tanimbar, Rote, Bawean, and Kangean Islands highlight similarities with weirs in Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines, reinforcing Austronesian connections. The study applies archaeological mapping, GIS spatial analysis, historical cartography, satellite imagery, and ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, to examine their cultural and environmental context. Building on 2023–2025 fieldwork in Bawean and Kangean, the research will expand in 2026 with a detailed study of Kangean weirs. This project asks how these structures were organised, what factors influenced their construction, and why they declined. Findings will inform heritage management and support future World Heritage nomination efforts. Again, I'd like to thank the 2025 Scholarship Committee for their time, expertise and thoughtful feedback- David Nutley, Peta Straiton, Wendy van Duivenvoorde and Danielle Wilkinson.

The 2026 AIMA Scholarship will be announced when the AGM date is known. In the meantime, I eagerly await the results of Amir and Dwi's research.

Celeste Jordan
AIMA Scholarship Chair

In Memoriam

John Waskiw



It is with great sadness that we heard of the passing of John Waskiw, our dedicated Social Media Administrator.

When John was appointed to the role in 2024, he was celebrating being in remission from cancer. Sadly, his illness returned during his time with us and he passed away on 5 December at the age of 52.

John's wife, Brooke Jones, shared that he never lost his passion or enthusiasm for archaeology and the maritime world. This dedication was evident in John's final post to the AIMA Facebook page on 4 December, made during the AAA/AIMA Conference, just one day before his passing.

John was nearing completion of his final subject for a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Archaeology, at the University of Southern Queensland and was greatly looking forward to commencing his Honours year.

John's commitment to managing our social media presence was clear. Under his energy, our Facebook page saw frequent activity with AIMA updates and shared posts from many likeminded pages. John also took on responsibility for our Instagram account – despite some hesitation – ensuring it remained up to date with news and upcoming events. John often proactively and intuitively shared information, keeping AIMA members informed across all platforms and providing valuable support to the Executive.

John worked quietly and diligently, always dependable and generous with his time. His efforts to share news from AIMA and from the many maritime, history, heritage and archaeology groups across Australia and internationally were a valuable contribution to the discipline.

During AHOY and Executive meetings, John was often content to listen, but when he spoke, he did so with warmth, energy and good humour that lifted everyone present. He will be fondly remembered and deeply missed.

There was a public memorial for John in February and our thoughts and sympathies are with John's wife, family and friends as they navigate this significant loss.

In Memoriam

Anthony Raimondo

Anthony Raimondo, AIMA member and Flinders University Maritime Archaeology student, just beginning his Masters of Maritime Archaeology, passed away on the 4th of January after an extended illness. He was due to graduate from his recently completed undergraduate archaeology degree in January 2026 and had just begun his Masters, successfully completing an intensive in marine geophysics. Anthony was highly engaged with the archaeology and maritime archaeology community despite his illness and will be sorely missed.

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AIMA Position Holders

Executive Officers

President: John McCarthy

Secretary: Pauline Ramsey

Treasurer: Chelsea Wiseman

Senior Vice President: Justine Buchler

Vice President 1: Jane Mitchell has stepped down and we are seeking a new VP1.

Vice President 2: Peter Harvey

Councillors

Patrick Morrison	Vicki Richards
Deb Shefi	Mark Polzer
Jo Edney	Jonathan Benjamin
Michael O'Donnell	Liam Norris
Toni Massey	Mick de Ruyter
Katie Woo	Natali Pearson
Jim Stedman	Chris Lewczak
Celeste Jordan	Maddy McAllister
Ben Wharton	Gay Lacsina
Peta Straiton	Wendy van Duivenvoorde

Administrative Positions

Journal Editor: Jeremy Green

Assistant Editors: Peter Harvey, Maddy McAllister, Aurora Philpin, Deb Shefi, Myra Stanbury

Newsletter Editor: Julia Phillips and Emily Wilkinson

Social Media: Katie Pearson

Merchandise Officer: Sasha Joura

Dive Committee Chair: Deb Shefi

Scholarships Committee: Celeste Jordan

Website Administrator: Danielle Wilkinson

A note from the Newsletter Editors...

We would like to thank those from the maritime archaeology community who contributed to this April 2026 issue of the newsletter. As always please feel free to get in contact with us for anything you wish to be included in the next edition which will be out toward the end of June 2026.

Julia and Emily

Email: newsletter.editor@aima-underwater.org.au

Upcoming Newsletter Submission Dates

Content from April – June 2026 due by 17th of June 2026.

