Frontispiece 1. Shadow on the Land, an excavation and bush burial *by Nicholas Galanin, at Cockatoo Island, as part of the 22ⁿᵈ Biennale of Sydney (2020). The installation was commissioned by the Biennale with assistance from the U.S. Government and features a trench cut in the shape and size of the monument to Captain James Cook that stands in Sydney's Hyde Park. Cook's monument has been a focus of recent protests, and the artist describes the installation as a call to bury not only Cook's statue, but also his wider colonial legacy. By adopting the form and methods of an archaeological excavation to open a grave for the monument, Galanin subverts one of the technologies through which Indigenous populations were deprived of their heritage. Courtesy the artist; photograph: Jessica Maurer.*

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Frontispiece 2. Excavation of a 'timber circle' within the Perdigões archaeological complex, near Évora in southern Portugal, during summer 2020. The circle, of which one-third has been excavated, lies at the centre of the Perdigões ditched enclosures, a series of concentric ditches, the largest of which is 450m in diameter. The wider complex dates from 3400–2000 BC. The timber circle, the first to have been identified in Iberia, features several concentric palisades and post alignments, with an estimated maximum diameter of around 20m; it dates from the first half of the third millennium BC (c. 2800–2600). The Perdigões complex has been the subject of investigations by the Era Arqueologia research unit for two decades. Photograph: Era Arqueologia.

GUEST EDITORIAL

☎ Academic conferences have long played an essential role in the sharing of knowledge and the networking of scholarly communities. They are particularly important for the early career researcher, offering the opportunity to present and discuss research, to interact face to face with both peers and established figures in the field and, of course, to travel and experience new places. For post-doctoral researchers and PhD students in developing countries such as India, however, conference participation is severely limited by a lack of funding and opportunities, often leaving us distant from the centres of discussion. As a result, early career researchers in such regions find it difficult to network with the international archaeological community, and our work remains poorly known on the global stage. Around the world, conferences have predominantly retained the traditional format of in-person presentations and panels, with large gatherings of researchers brought together by organising committees of senior scholars based in university or government departments. In India, for example, such meetings include the annual conferences of the Indian Archaeological Society, the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies, the History and Culture Society and the Rock Art Society of India. Globally, some conferences occasionally have provided the option for online presentations. The International Symposium on Knappable Materials, for example, introduced optional virtual presentations in 2013.[1] This format, however, has been very much the exception rather than the rule. Most conference organising committees have continued to encourage personal gatherings of researchers to enable better scholarly communication and easier social interaction.

This has all changed with the COVID-19 pandemic. Major conferences, including those of the World Archaeology Congress, the International Union of the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences and the International Geological Congress, have been cancelled or postponed. Others, such as the European Association of Archaeologists, the Society of South Asian Archaeology and the PAGES-INQUA workshop, have shifted their programmes online.[2] At the same time, however, that these long-planned conferences have been compelled by the coronavirus to adopt a virtual format, another response to the pandemic has been a burst of newly instigated online lectures and seminar series, such as the 'Down Ancient Trails' forum, organised by the Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, with which we have been associated since its inception in March. Other initiatives that have developed in response to the pandemic and associated lockdowns include online lectures organised by non-governmental groups such as Puratattvasamvardhan, the Sindhujan Academy, Karwan,

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[1] Crandell, O. 2014. First issue of the *Journal of Lithic Studies. Journal of Lithic Studies* 1(1): 1–6. https://doi.org/10.2218/jls.v1i1.816
[2] Available at: https://inqua.org/blog/34/pages-inqua-ecr-workshop-on-past-socio-environmental-systems-2nd-circular?category=ecr-news (accessed 11 August 2020).

Nibbling Nuts, Adventures in Archaeology, Palaeotalks, Exclamations Goa, Museovision and many more. In addition to this, universities and research institutes, including the National Institute of Advanced Studies, the Himalayan Institute of Cultural and Heritage Studies, the Bengaluru Historians Society, the International Council of Museums, India, and the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives and Museums, Government of Madhya Pradesh, have also organised virtual lectures and talks. As this list of initiatives suggests, COVID-19 has precipitated a new way of thinking and working.

In practice, the pandemic has cast the existing problems of funding, travel and conference participation in a new light, and digital innovations have moved assertively to the fore. It was against this background that we conceived and organised the 'Archaeology from Home: Connecting Things and Thoughts' conference. The virtual format was intended not only to allow researchers from India and beyond to share research and to network regardless of funding, it was also to be the first virtual conference on Indian archaeology to be organised entirely by and for early career researchers. We thus sought to overcome established hierarchies, both in the organisation of and participation in traditional archaeological conferences.

Our conference sought to bring together researchers, particularly those currently pursuing research on prehistory and Quaternary sciences at MA, MPhil, PhD or post-doctoral level, to discuss their research, to develop multidisciplinary insights and, most importantly, to build new collaborative networks—all without leaving their homes. To the best of our knowledge, the only similar virtual early career researcher event is vPASES2020, scheduled for November 2020.[3] As the organisers of 'Archaeology from Home', we relied throughout on social media and digital tools to coordinate and facilitate the meeting. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Zoom were essential for everything from the call for papers through to the presentations. The final programme featured 43 early career researchers, including the 5 organisers, from 12 countries: Canada, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, the UK and the USA, as well as India.

The conference was timed to begin on 30 May, commemorating an important date in the history of Indian archaeology. On this day in 1863, Robert Bruce Foote identified the first Palaeolithic tool to be discovered in India.[4] On the anniversary of this significant find, early career researchers working on prehistory and Quaternary sciences were invited to come together to discuss their research with the same scientific curiosity and enthusiasm that characterised Foote's formative investigations on prehistoric India. Appropriately, the conference was opened by Foote's great-grandson, Jonathan Foote, who sent a recorded motivational message welcoming the participants and wishing the conference all success.

Although we specifically sought to attract early career researchers to present their work, audience registration was open to all. The response of the world archaeological community was unexpected and overwhelming. Our online platform, however, was limited to 100 participants and registration was managed on a first-come first-served basis, with a reserve list.

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[3] The 'Past Socio-Environmental Systems' workshop sponsored by Past Global Changes and the International Union for Quaternary Research. Available at: https://www.pases2020.com/ (accessed 11 August 2020).
[4] Pappu, S. 2008. Prehistoric antiquities and personal lives: the untold story of Robert Bruce Foote. *Man and Environment* 33(1): 30–50.

The conference programme featured 9 themed sessions with a total of 43 contributions: 37 oral presentations, 3 posters and 3 artistic offerings.[5] The sessions were spread across six days, with six or seven 15-minute presentations held daily between 15:00 and 18:00 IST, each chaired by an eminent Indian archaeologist: Profs P. Ajithprasad, J. Kharakwal, V. Sathe, R. Korisettar, K. Krishnan and S. Pappu. The sessions were intentionally diverse and wide-ranging. In the 'Revisiting the past: historiography' session, for example, speakers discussed topics ranging from the contributions of important figures such as K.R.U. Todd[6] through to histories of specific regional studies. One of the most eagerly awaited sessions was 'Hot from the field: reports on recent field investigations', which featured presentations of new work on varied Palaeolithic contexts from southern, western and central India, as well as from Sudan and South Africa. Other themes included sessions on lithic and ceramic technologies, palaeoenvironments, rock art, genetics and studies covering Palaeolithic to Neolithic cultural phases, each with contributions from various regions of India and presentations on other parts of Asia, Africa and Europe. To spark the imagination, alongside these oral presentations and posters we also sought contributions in poetic form, which, to the best of our knowledge, is the first time that poetry has featured at a formal archaeology conference in India. These poems, engaging with Indus script, cultural transitions and archaeological dating, were presented through the conference Facebook and Twitter photograph galleries.

The audience comprised a wide group of scholars of all career-stages and from a range of countries. How could we bring this diverse group together? The virtual format can inhibit spontaneity and make it difficult to create an impact on a personal level. Sessions were therefore kept deliberately informal to facilitate interaction. With over 80 audience members for each presentation, questions were directed to the chat box feature, and we believe that the anonymity of this function encouraged a greater number of participants to engage than would have been the case 'in person'. These questions facilitated active discussion around the presentations and drew out the wider resonance of each specific case study for research, and researchers, around the globe. Establishing the connections between individuals and ideas is a key function of the traditional conference format, and we were able to witness the use of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, alongside the conference sessions, to facilitate these critical aspects of academic networking.

As well as research presentations, we also scheduled a training session for the participants of the conference. The programming language R is now widely used for data analysis in the social and natural sciences, including archaeology. In India, however, at least in the context of archaeological analysis, the use of R is unknown. As part of the conference, we therefore held an 'Introduction to R in archaeology' workshop, organised in collaboration with the Sharma Centre (Figure 1). The workshop was led by Dr Ben Marwick of the University of Washington. As the first R training session for archaeologists to be held in India, the workshop was literally aimed at taking data analysis in Indian archaeology into the future. The interactive session included both theoretical and 'hands-on' training to develop conceptual and practical

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[5] Available at: http://www.sharmaheritage.com/archaeology-from-homeconnecting-things-and-thoughts (accessed 11 August 2020).

[6] Ruikar, T. 2014. K.R.U. Todd: a forgotten personality in the study of Indian prehistory. *Antiquity* Project Gallery 340(88): http://journal.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/ruikar340
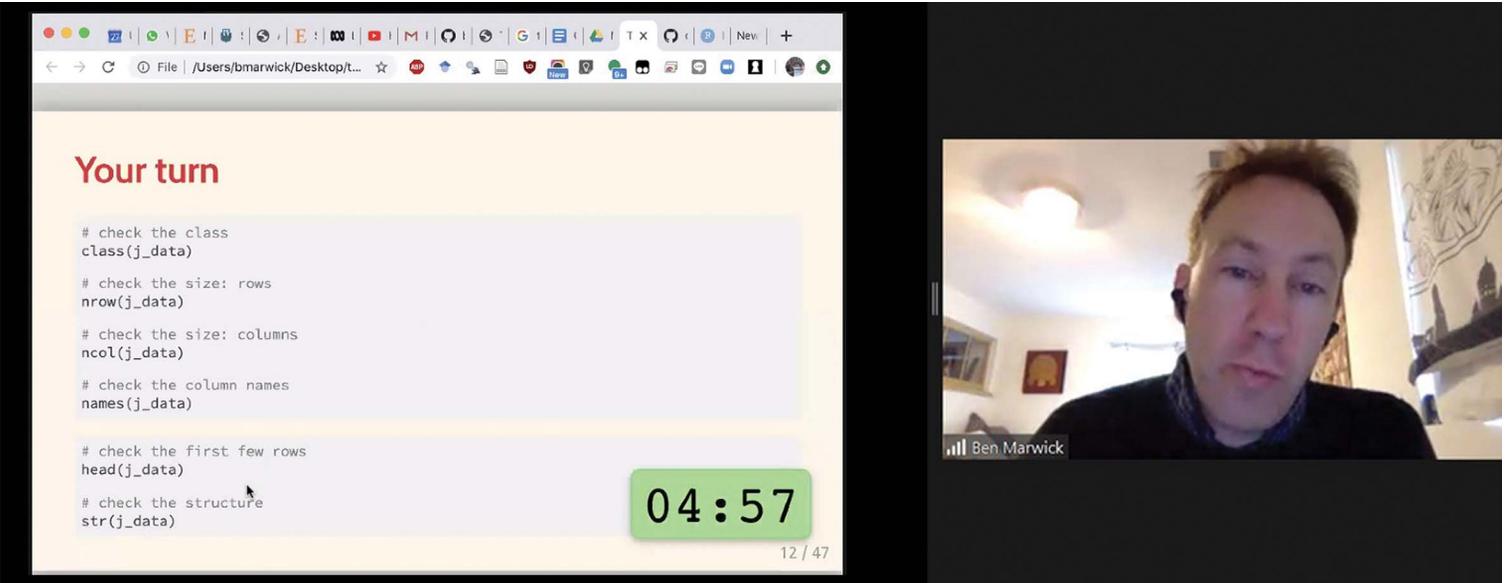
Figure 1. The 'Introduction to R in archaeology' workshop, led by Dr Ben Marwick.
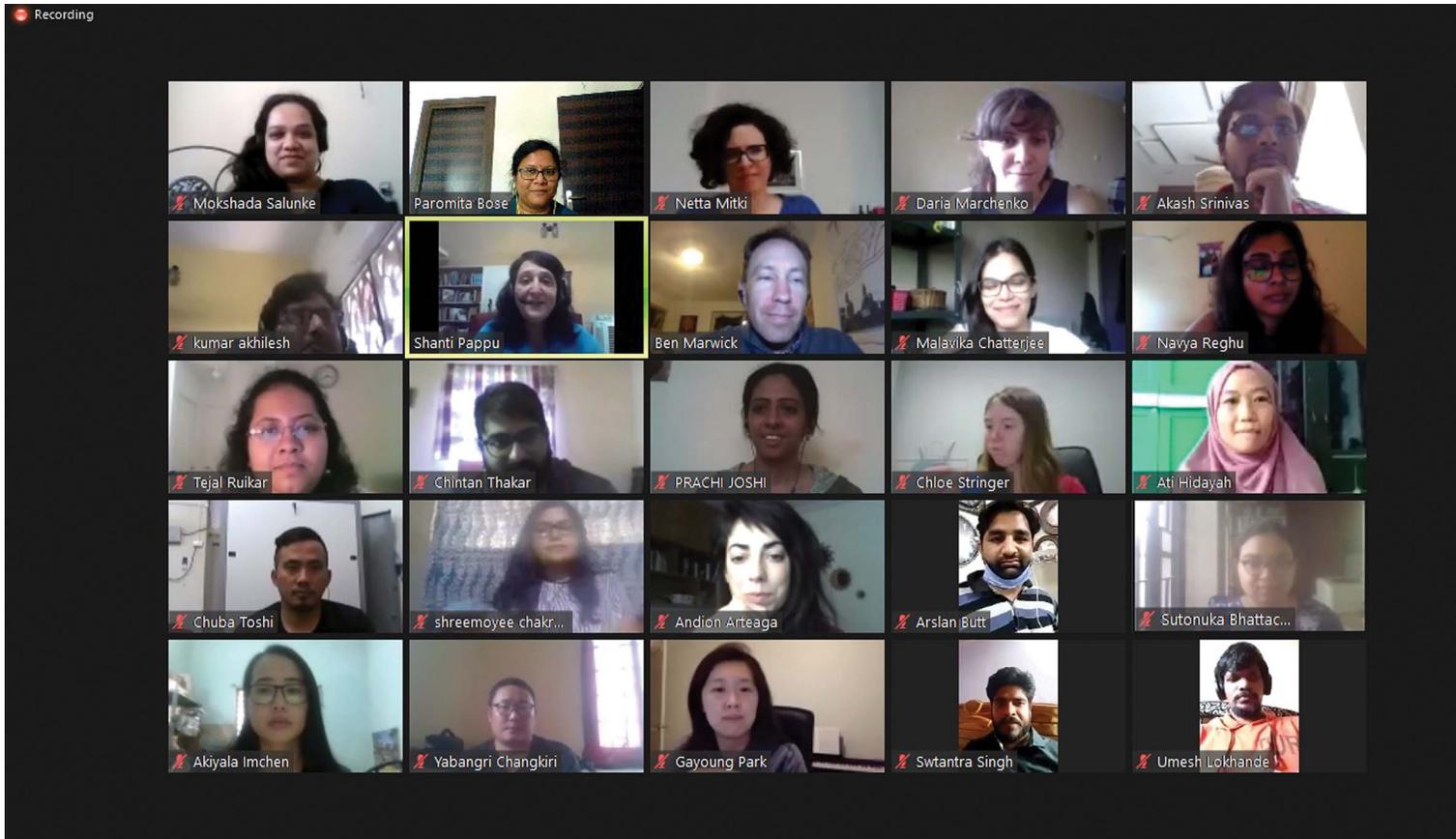
Figure 2. The organisers and participants of 'Archaeology from Home' attending the 'Introduction to R in archaeology' workshop.

software skills, and there were many questions and much lively discussion (Figure 2). With this new experience of using R, it is now up to us as individual researchers to develop and make use of these skills in our future work.

Finally, as is traditional at the conclusion of a conference, our virtual meeting also ended with a group photograph—or screenshot—of the participants, and the promise to organise a follow-up meeting to address more specific themes.

Our experience of organising a new type of conference, seeking solutions for not only the world of COVID-19 but also pre-existing systemic issues, has been highly positive. Dispersed as we were in different parts of India, some with sporadic internet access, we had to be flexible; for example, switching between laptops and mobile phones to maintain network access and helping each other when connections failed during the conference. Despite the challenges, the unexpectedly huge response we have received has given us the confidence that early career researchers working in difficult conditions can efficiently organise an international conference and use digital technologies to challenge scholarly norms and break down global and local hierarchies. We have advanced the possibilities of building bridges between upcoming and senior scholars, wherever they may be around the world, and bringing them together as peers in the common goal of knowledge exchange. We have thus established a precedent—for us and others, to build upon—for the sharing of research, the development of skills and the creation of peer networks, that seamlessly cuts across geographic, financial and political boundaries in these most trying of times. We firmly believe that the adaptive skills of the human race will enable us to thrive in this new environment, with digital technologies allowing us to interact and collaborate as we all adapt to the 'new normal'.[7]

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