



Society of Antiquaries
of **Scotland**

THE RHIND LECTURES **2022**

Unearthing the African Diaspora

Professor Theresa Singleton PhD FSA



Free and open to all – registration required

Attend in person at the Augustine United Church,
41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL
or attend online

Please visit

www.socantscot.org/event/rhind-lectures-2022

to see details and register

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THE RHIND LECTURES 2022

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Unearthing the African Diaspora

Professor Theresa Singleton PhD FSA

African Diaspora Archaeology studies people of African descent in the Americas and elsewhere. This research began in the mid-20th century on the sites of enslaved and liberated communities. Today it is one of the fastest growing study areas in the archaeology of the modern world. In this lecture series, Professor Theresa Singleton discusses this developing archaeological discipline using her own projects as case studies beginning with her introduction to diaspora studies as a graduate student, to her current research on self-liberated and other free communities.

Professor Theresa Singleton PhD FSA

Theresa is Professor of Anthropology at Syracuse University, New York, USA, and the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions, at University of Cambridge, 2021–22. She was also Curator of Historical Archaeology at the Smithsonian Institution, 1988–2000. Her areas of expertise are African diasporas, slavery and plantations, museums, the southern United States, and the Caribbean. Her most recent book, *Slavery Behind the Wall*, was published in 2015. In 2014, the Society for Historical Archaeology awarded her the J. C. Harrington Medal for her lifetime contributions to archaeology.

Friday 10 June

5pm Overview of African Diaspora Archaeology

This first lecture provides a historical overview to studies in African Diaspora Archaeology. It examines various sites enslaved peoples, slave runaways, and free blacks occupied, and the artefacts recovered from them. I also briefly discuss my career path as it related to this research.

6.15pm Gullah-Geechee archaeology at Butler Island

My first major project was undertaken at Butler Island, a 19th-century rice plantation about 80km south of Savannah, Georgia, USA. 'Gullah-Geechee' refers to African American communities who live in coastal South Carolina and Georgia and are descendants of the enslaved people who worked on plantations like Butler Island. They are known today for their language (Gullah), crafts, and musical performances.

Followed by a drinks reception.

Saturday 11 June

2pm Digging through museum collections

I worked in museums for 18 years, and at each one I found artefacts associated with African Americans that had received little or no attention prior to my interest in them. I conducted research on several of these artefacts primarily for museum exhibitions. In this lecture I highlight a few of these 'collection finds' and discuss their significance in the study of African American life.

3.30pm Revisiting Gullah-Geechee archaeology and heritage

In 2008 I was invited to participate in a conference on the Gullah-Geechee of Georgia that provided me with the opportunity to update my research but also reconnect with members of the Gullah-Geechee community. Since then I have been regularly consulted on heritage issues that pertain to the preservation of Butler Island and related sites that are now threatened by redevelopment.

Sunday 12 June

3.30pm A serendipitous turn to Cuban slavery

An unexpected opportunity to travel to Cuba presented itself while I was working at the Smithsonian that ultimately led to developing an archaeological project at a former coffee plantation with a unique slave settlement that was fully enclosed within a tall masonry wall. Undertaking this research project turned my understanding of slavery on its head as well as broadening my understanding of the Afro-Latin American Diaspora.

5pm Beyond slavery: sites of liberation

While researching Cuban slavery I became interested in those who fled slavery. Most of them hid in caves and other secluded places and often relied on enslaved people for assistance in harbouring them. This led me to begin a project in Dominican Republic where some of the earliest slave runaway settlements were established. While doing this research I learned that some of these runaway settlements were granted their freedom and became Free Black Towns. This ongoing project is described in this lecture.

Followed by a Q&A session.

For more information, visit:

www.socantscot.org/event/rhind-lectures-2022

Tickets are free and popular, so early registration is advisable.



The RHIND LECTURES, a series of six lectures delivered annually on a subject pertaining to history or archaeology, by eminent authorities on the subject, have been given since 1876. They commemorate Alexander Henry Rhind of Sibster (1833–63) who left a bequest to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland to endow the lectures which perpetuate his name.

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Cover image: conducting test excavations at Butler Island Plantation Site © Theresa Singleton.
This image: Young boys with large baskets on their heads, Sapelo Island (1915–34) from a collection at Georgia Archives, University System of Georgia. Inside image: a Gullah basket photographed by Bubba73 (Jud McCranie), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

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