

Newsletter of the Professional Historians' Association (NSW)

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PHANFARE



The Bacardi Building in Havana, regarded as one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in Latin America. Courtesy Jennifer Thorsborne



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This edition of *Phanfare* has been prepared by the Eclectic Collective – Rosemary Broomham, Rosemary Kerr, Christa Ludlow and Terri McCormack

Historians Speak Up!

The recent launch of Sue Rosen's *Australia's Oldest House: Surgeon John Harris and Experiment Farm Cottage*, which has attracted some media attention, offers an important and timely opportunity for other historians to make their voices heard and to contribute to the public debate about the role of history in our national culture. Many of our members could tell similar stories of inadequate funding allocated to historical research and marginalisation of historians' role in heritage practice. The recent celebration of Heritage Week makes this an opportune time to promote historians' capacity to make a powerful contribution to the understanding and preservation of our built environment – an environment that has much to tell about who we are, where we have come from and where we are going. Get involved – listen to Sue's interviews with Philip Adams and Deb Cameron and contribute to the blog discussion on the Radio National and ABC 702 websites:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/latenightlive/stories/2010/2847366.htm>

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/files/ef-cottage.mp3>

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/nsw/2010/03/australias-oldest-house.html>

**See Sue Rosen's article on page 11

President's Page

Congratulations to Margo Beasley on her appointment as Oral Historian at the City of Sydney Council. Apart from being delighted for Margo, I see this as an important appointment. It sends two clear signals. Firstly, that oral history is an important part of historical methodology and that its practitioners may well have professional qualifications. Secondly, it recognises that professional historians deserve to be paid properly and employed under reasonable conditions. Appointments like these can be invoked by other members seeking employment in local government or in the private sector.

The programme for our 25th anniversary conference ***Islands of History***, 18-25 July, has been finalised. Over thirty people, historians, archaeologists, museum curators and heritage specialists from Australia New Zealand, New Caledonia, and Norfolk Island are contributing, and there is quite a range of topics. There will be active sessions, visiting historic sites too. See it all at <http://www.phansw.org.au/>. This is chance to visit a potential UNESCO world heritage area. So book your travel and accommodation and register soon. ACPHA has given PHA (NSW) a grant towards covering costs of publishing the conference proceedings.

Mark your diary for further celebration at our fifth annual *History in July* gathering on Tuesday 28th July. Dr Kirsten McKenzie, University of Sydney will be our guest speaker.

In March a group of PHA members visited the Royal Botanic Gardens Library and were introduced to the delights and treasures of its collection by Garcia. Then PHA Secretary, Jodi Frawley took us on a tour and revealed knowledge and site details about the gardens themselves. It was a good morning. Thank you, Jodi for organising this. (see report in this issue).

During Heritage Festival Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton led a discussion on *Myth and memory: Making a Nation*, as part of our popular series *History @ the Hero*. They considered how the Nation has been shaped by collective memory. And the role of the heritage industry in fashioning and refashioning the nation. It was a stimulating session and discussion continued over dinner. Thank you, executive committee member, Zoe Pollock for arranging this event. (a report will follow in next issue of *Phanfare*)

There are more events to look forward to: City of Sydney Archives, Powerhouse Museum. See the full professional development program for the next few months at http://www.phansw.org.au/professional_dev.html

We have had some positive responses from metropolitan councils to our letter campaign, raising awareness of what professional historians can do for councils and the range of skills they can offer. We are now in the process of gradually mailing all rural councils

The proposed closing of the National Archives offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart scheduled to begin this year, although seemingly arrested, is still an issue, which ACPHA President Bernie O'Neil, is pursuing on behalf of all historians.

A thought. It seems to have become a mantra at (history) book launches to say, 'History is so often boring - but this one isn't.' How can we counter this perception!? Please keep in touch president@phansw.org.au

Virginia Macleod

Heritage in Havana

Terri McCormack



The photo on the left was the view from my fourth floor window in Havana. This was one of many private casas I stayed in during a recent month in Cuba. This might look like old Havana but is in fact crowded noisy Centro where most Cubans live and few tourists visit. Mine was an art deco building that, like all others in this area, was the victim of 50 years of revolutionary grime and neglect. The wildly eclectic architecture and the vitality of the people make it a lively place.



This is my street, Neptuno, on an unusually deserted day. The RCA-Victor building on the left is clearly dated 1912 although it was not until 1929 that the Radio Corporation of America took over the Victor Talking Machine Company (begun in 1901) to become RCA-Victor. I assumed the crumbling building was abandoned until I saw the family living on the roof.

Below is the restored Plaza de la Catedral in Old Havana, the historic centre of the city founded in 1519 as the principal port of Spain's New World colonies.



Old Havana is defined by the remnants of its original walls and is separated from Centro by Parque Central, bordered by some of Havana's most iconic buildings, including the restored Gran Teatro and the Hotel Inglaterra, below.



The restoration of Old Havana began in 1968 with the appointment of Eusebio Leal as City Historian but it was not until it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 that a formal program began. Since then, more than 90 civil, religious, military, and domestic structures have been restored. The Office of the City Historian is supported by Habaguanex, a government-run company created in the post-Soviet economic crisis of the early 1990s to develop infrastructure for tourism. Many of the renovated buildings generate income as restaurants, hotels, concert halls and museums. One of the many buildings undergoing restoration is seen below.





Anywhere else, the photograph above would indicate a gentrified street from which the original residents have been forced out. Not in Old Havana: these buildings are still inhabited. The City Historian's Office is unique: it not only preserves buildings but also social capital. Whole neighbourhoods – the building blocks of society in communist Cuba – are rehabilitated. To avoid the negative effects of gentrification, residents are involved in the planning process. Where possible, communities are kept intact by returning families to their homes after renovation. Not just the built environment but also the public infrastructure has deteriorated over the years so social projects provide basic services like running water, medical clinics, child care, seniors' centres, playgrounds and arts programs in each district. As well as historians, conservators, architects, geologists and archaeologists, the Office of the City Historian includes educators, psychologists, social workers, and health care workers.

Some of the art work enlivening the walls of a part of Old Havana undergoing rejuvenation can be glimpsed near this children's playground, below.



The City Historian has brought about the rehabilitation of the colonial heart of Havana, not only in terms of its diverse built heritage but also in the revitalisation of the way of life of its inhabitants. For his unique work, Eusebio Leal has been honoured with many international awards. One was the World Decade for Cultural Development Medal in 2009, awarded for the environmental balance, economical viability, social justice, and cultural diversification of his integral development project in Old Havana. On presenting it to Leal, UNESCO's Assistant-Director General for Culture described it as "the epicentre of creative experience in world heritage".

The Office of the City Historian is now a large, complex and influential organisation employing over 7,000 people. It occupies one of the most spectacular of the restorations: the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, now the City Museum of Havana, below left.

Completed in 1776 and originally housing the Spanish Governor, the Palacio takes principal place on the Plaza de Armas, the oldest square in the city. Restoration work began in 1967 and took many decades. With its elegant columns and imposing courtyard surrounded by double galleries, it is the most outstanding and significant of Cuba's many colonial style buildings. The town of San Cristobal de la Habana was founded on the shores of nearby Havana Bay in 1519, serving as a base for the Spanish conquests of Central and South America. It was in the adjacent plaza that the Spanish flag was lowered on 1 January 1899 after 389 years of sovereignty. And it was here, in the great reception room of the Palacio, that the Republic of Cuba was first proclaimed on 1 May 1902, below right. Today forty rooms of the governors' palace have been lovingly and lavishly furnished with exquisite artefacts from the Museum's collections, reflecting the aesthetic atmosphere and the historical inheritance of the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales.



[Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana]



[Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana]

Havana appeals to tourists because of its picturesque decadence, its decaying mansions, its seductive music, and its 1950s Chevrolets but living there is another matter. Because of the American embargo, Cuba is struggling economically. It is not a Third World country but one deprived of many things that we in the West regard as essentials. While everyone has food, shelter, education and medical care, it will be a while before they have much more. It is amazing that against this background the Office of the City Historian has done so much. Street by street Old Havana is being rescued but it will be centuries if ever before the unique architectural treasures of the rest of Havana are saved.



Above, a balcony in Old Havana where tourists enjoy the restored ambience of this fascinating city; and, below, a balcony opposite my casa in Centro, an area of Havana that will probably continue to decay. Despite its desperate appearance, it is occupied by a Cuban family. Everyone is provided with some form of accommodation in Cuba.



[For permission to use the photographs above, I thank old friend, fine photographer, and awesome salsa dancer, Jennifer Thorsborne]

Myall Lakes National Park: A people's history **—The Book Launch**

Rosemary Broomham

The book launch was held in the morning at Shadwell Park House, a building that now stands in the Myall Lakes National Park and is used as a conference and training centre. In an idyllic setting overlooking Smiths Lake, it used to be the home of Colin and Betty Bramble. In fact, Colin built it in the mid-1950s as their marital home. Further north on the same lake shore is Horse Point where Colin's father Whylie Bramble lived in the old family home and another of his sons, Lyall had another house for his family. This information is pertinent to the conduct of the book launch because Betty Bramble was chosen to make the main presentation. The Brambles are descended from one of the original settlers in the Myall Lakes district and Betty is revered as a very knowledgeable local historian. Indeed, she gave me a great deal of information and advice when the project began.



Shadwell Park House, Myall Lakes National Park. R Broomham

Commissioned by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the book began life as the oral and contextual history for the conservation management plan for the Myall Lakes National Park. Completing a conservation plan is always a prolonged exercise and this was no exception. Then, there were other issues that extended the project. Among these were the long periods of inactivity between completing the history, finishing the conservation plan, learning of the decision to publish the history, finishing the editing, and finally receiving the publication – periods of complete silence from the commissioning body that, from my point of view, were filled with doubt.

The launch was an informal affair and most of those attending were people whose interviews had become an important feature of the book. When I made the recordings, many who agreed to see me were still angry about the loss of their homes, lifestyles, and sometimes livelihoods to the National Park. Worse still, there was a new fear of interference and loss that would result from the gazettal of the Great Lakes–Port Stephens Marine Park which came into effect in December 2005, soon after I began the project. As I explained in the book, ‘former residents and local fishermen...expressed their fear that they would be barred from earning their livelihood or spending their leisure time on waterways that have been their families resource for three or four generations’. Sometimes they did this vociferously.

In the light of this situation, imagine the mixture of pleasure and trepidation that I experienced when I learned who was going to attend the launch. To better understand the landscape, the people, their occupations and history, I had interviewed 30 people, sometimes in groups of two or three. They included residents and former residents and visiting scientists and conservationists whose recollections and information gave life to the documentary research. Of course I looked forward to seeing these people again; recording stories about other people's life experiences can make friendships. But it is also a delicate undertaking that can become personal when emotions still run high about events that changed people's lives against their dearest wishes. The Park's formation and growth did that to some of the people I talked to.



A view of Smiths Lake from the northern shore looking towards the Brambles' properties. R Broomham

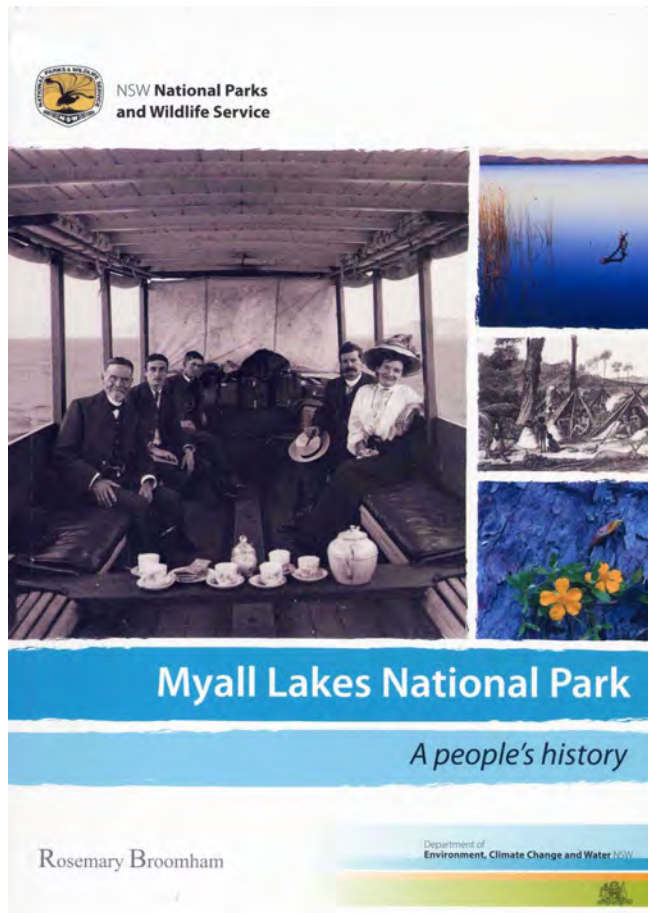
Proceedings at the launch unfolded in the usual manner. The National Parks Manager of the Hunter Region, Robert Quirk, made an introductory speech explaining that the conservation plan and the book arose in response to local concerns that the history of the human occupation and uses of the Myall Lakes district would be lost unless it was purposefully recorded. I then made a speech which mentioned my long associations with the region and my love for it. However, my main concern was to thank the people who freely extended their hospitality and shared their experiences with me. The life and feeling in the recordings was so expressive that I quoted them directly in the text wherever possible. Although I try to avoid speaking in public, this was one occasion when I embraced it. I fully appreciated the chance to thank such important contributors to the Myall Lakes story.

It must be said, however, that the star of the show was Betty Bramble. She enthralled her audience; she made us laugh and moved us to tears. Like some speakers at earlier launches of mine, she appropriated the occasion to serve her own purposes. Betty spoke at length about the importance of the Bramble family to the Myall Lakes area. She told how former convict William Bramble moved from Millers Forest near Raymond Terrace, where he had finished his sentence in 1845, and settled at Brambles Green 'on the eastern side of the Myall River before you get to Tea Gardens'.

The reason he'd move would be grazing his cattle. At first he used to graze his cattle, with the government's permission, from Tea Gardens to Bungwahl. All the way up the other side. The reason for that is he only had a kilometre of fence. He had the Pacific Ocean for a fence, he had the Myall Lake for a fence, and where Bungwahl joined Smiths Lake he had a – and we still call it the Big Gate, because he put a gate on it.

That's the Big Gate. Then he moved to Bibby Harbour, what you call Kataway now, was also part of the property.¹

That part of Betty Bramble's speech is in the book. From this point, however, she moved on to explain the early history of Shadwell Park – the property rather than the building we were in – as the original house had gone. The name – which, she admitted, probably seemed pretentious to neighbours in the 1950s – had been adopted by the person who sold it to the Brambles. Alas, I have lost some of the details; it did not seem appropriate to take notes. Suffice it to say that when Betty talked about Whyllie Bramble who lived in the old house on Shadwell Park, Kath, one of his granddaughters interjected to tell a story about him. One day, when she was an infant, he watched her crawl across the log that bridged the creek and crawl back again. She was alone but he did nothing to stop her – just watched to see that she was all right. He was known to be 'a character'.



Kath became more distressed as Betty relayed the tale of her discovery that the property that Shadwell Park was scheduled to be part of the Myall Lakes National Park. A map in the newspaper, which showed the planned extent of the park, had all the future acquisitions coloured pink. In fact, all the Bramble properties on Horse Point were pink but no one from the National Parks and Wildlife Service had mentioned this to the Brambles. Betty ended her speech by saying that her son had promised to scatter her ashes on the ground in front of the house and so, bring her home at last. Now there were more tears, and, although Betty made the story extremely comical, the memory of times when others in the audience had to leave their homes had entered the room with us. It revived emotions I encountered when I first started interviewing people in November 2005.

Apart from a throwaway line at the end, when Betty said it would be a useful addition to publications on the Myall Lakes area, the book did not feature. Afterwards, as people gathered round the table set with morning tea in Betty Bramble's former house, some of the friends I had made during the project were unable to speak to me. Thankfully, however, there were others there who had never experienced the idyllic life at Shadwell Park or spent their childhoods in the Bramble houses left to fall into ruin on Horse Point – and they were as pleasant as ever. The book is available from the NPWS Hunter Region Office, 12 B Teramby Road, Nelson Bay, NSW, 2315, Ph (02) 4984 8200.

¹ Rosemary Broomham, *Myall Lakes National Park: A people's history*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney, 2010, p 38

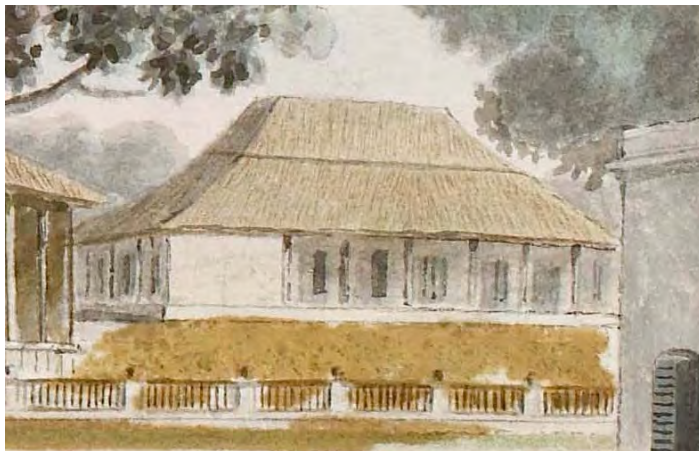
Australia's Oldest House – Why it Matters

Sue Rosen

When the debate over the dating of *Experiment Farm Cottage* at Parramatta was first brought to my attention in the early 1990s I had the same quizzical reaction as everyone else: Why wouldn't the National Trust be delighted at the prospect of being the custodian of the oldest European structure in the country? Why doesn't the Trust relish the debate and the potential for discussion of heritage and architecture and history? It was a mystery to me and it still puzzles. What I have found out is that the Trust's behaviour and opinions have not changed in this regard since the 1980s, despite accumulated evidence that suggests a review would be prudent. In the Trust's April E-Newsletter they refer to the recent publication of *Australia's Oldest House: Surgeon John Harris Experiment Farm Cottage*, stating that:

The arguments put forward are not new and have been previously considered and found to be inconclusive.

This is an incredible statement given the quantity of new evidence put forward in *Australia's Oldest House* that has never been considered; and a new analysis and dissection of evidence put forward by the Trust to support their mid 1830s dating. That response by the Trust emphasizes the importance of the issues raised in the book, relating to the Trust's engagement with historians, their assessment of historic evidence and their heritage management practices



This detail from 'South east view of Mr Oldfield's house at Maidapur and Doctor Wilson's bungalow near it' was painted in 1795. Dr James Wilson worked in the area as an assistant surgeon in 1781 and as a surgeon in 1793. Designed for living and working in, the house has many of the architectural features of Experiment Farm Cottage, with Harris having served in India in the 1780s, why is it such an unacceptable idea that such a house could not have been constructed in the 1790s in Parramatta? The British Library Board Add OC319C

As the preamble to the Burra Charter states that, significant places, such as *Experiment Farm Cottage*, are 'tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience ... telling us about who we are and the past that has formed us They are irreplaceable and precious ...' and 'must be conserved for future generations'. Importantly, underpinning the Charter is a cautious approach to change: 'do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained'.²

The National Trust (N.S.W) proclaims in its mission statement that it aims to:

Protect and conserve our treasured heritage today and for future generations, while remaining an independent, non-government community advocate.³

²<http://www.icomos.org/australia>

³<http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/about/default.asp>

And that the role of the Trust is:

To safeguard our natural, built and cultural heritage and to encourage Australians to appreciate that each generation has a responsibility to preserve our Nation's heritage for the next generation.⁴

The management of *Experiment Farm Cottage* by the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W) reflects a failure in the implementation of its own objectives. That *Experiment Farm Cottage* is presented to the public as an 1830s gentleman's residence is the product of the Trust's failure to abide by the principles of the Burra Charter and their failure to engage with specialist historians. Regrettably, the Trust is not the only organization that has let standards of heritage practise fall below that required by the Burra Charter.

The standard of application of conservation methodologies employed in the management of historic buildings and places, of which *Experiment Farm Cottage* is a representative example, have been thrown into stark relief by the origins saga which dates from the mid 1970s. While the NSW Heritage Office (ineffectually) raised concerns with regard to the evidence supporting the 1830s attribution of the *Cottage*, more often than not, listings and reports with inadequate historical input, have been routinely accepted, as perusal of the State Heritage Register and Heritage Inventory will demonstrate. This has happened despite a responsibility by the Heritage Office and its predecessor (and now successor), the Department of Planning, for overseeing the implementation and application of the NSW Heritage Act.

As outlined in *Australia's Oldest House*, a key concern raised by the origins debate was the professional evaluation of the evidence, and the degree of involvement and basis on which the various conservation discipline professionals were engaged in that process. Members of the National Trust's Women's Committee and their supporters found the new interpretation of *Experiment Farm Cottage* to the late 1830s period to be inconsistent with Harris's circumstances and life path. There was a feeling that the new interpretation just didn't 'stack up' and furthermore that the processes were inconsistent with the principles of the Burra Charter. Specific articles of the Burra Charter which were directly violated in the management of *Experiment Farm Cottage* include:

- Article 3.2 Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.
- Article 4.1 Conservation should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of a place.
- Article 6.1 The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.
- Article 6.2 The policy for managing a place must be based on an understanding of its cultural significance.
- Article 24.1 Significant associations between people and a place should be respected, retained and not obscured. Opportunities for the interpretation, commemoration and celebration of these associations should be investigated and implemented.

⁴<http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/about/default.asp>

- Article 26.1 Work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.
- Article 30 Direction, supervision and implementation. Competent direction and supervision should be maintained at all stages, and any changes should be implemented by people with appropriate knowledge and skills.
- Article 34 Resources. Adequate resources should be provided for conservation.

There are two major concerns related to the controversy surrounding the dating of *Experiment Farm Cottage*; one is related to historical credibility and the other is related to heritage practise in Australia. With the National Trust committed via its legislation to protect heritage places; and with many of the practitioners involved being members of ICOMOS⁵ Australia, the controversy over the dating of *Experiment Farm Cottage* is particularly appropriate as a case study into the calibre of heritage practice and its oversight in this country. Such an inquiry is appropriate and overdue because the origins issue has been one of lengthy and public debate and because the National Trust (N.S.W.) and its consultants were aware from the outset that the discussion was about the identification of a building that was potentially the oldest surviving European structure in Australia, and thus of great cultural significance. The importance of the issue was acknowledged in a report to the Trust Council in 1987 when the Trust executive decided that a panel of experts should be appointed to consider architect, David Sheedy's Conservation Management Plan because:

... the suggestion that EFC was built as early as 1794 casts serious doubts about a number of assumptions about Australian architectural development which have hitherto before been sacrosanct.⁶

In the twenty-plus years since Sheedy's research raised 'rather startling'⁷ new findings regarding *Experiment Farm Cottage*, and despite a substantial Federation Grant, the resources have not been applied to sustained high level historical analysis of the issue; an appropriate historian has not been engaged to undertake detailed research into the history of the cottage or John Harris, its architect. To make matters worse, while the state of ignorance concerning the *Cottage's* origins prevailed, the building has been re-interpreted and physical changes were made to its fabric.

While the files in the National Trust Archives reveal that various researchers and historians over the years have contributed data to the *Experiment Farm Cottage* history, their contribution has been spasmodic, and at a very basic level, often limited to the mere gathering of material. Their involvement has been inappropriately simplistic. The focus of work has been on locating explicit data to enable a dating, rather than understanding the data within its context. There has generally been no engagement with the less direct complex evidence and little heed paid to the testing and elimination of alternative interpretations. Overall, there has been demonstrated a lack of appreciation of and respect for, what historians have to offer in terms of understanding the social, economic and political context of the period in question. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Three, appropriate historical analysis is not about cobbling together a story that suits a hypothesis. It involves investigating

⁵ International Council on Monuments and Sites.

⁶National Trust Archives: P.C. James. Executive Director and Richard Mackay, Trust Archaeologist, Report to the National Trust Council, 20 July 1987.

⁷National Trust Archives: P.C. James. Executive Director and Richard Mackay, Trust Archaeologist, Report to the National Trust Council, 20 July 1987.

the context of that enticing line in a document and resisting taking as its meaning that meaning which most suits the predetermined argument. Rather, there is a need to be continually alert for alternative interpretations so that they can be tested and eliminated. These skills go well beyond basic 'hunting and gathering' in primary source repositories.



Experiment Farm Cottage c. 1964 after restoration by the National Trust Caroline Simpson

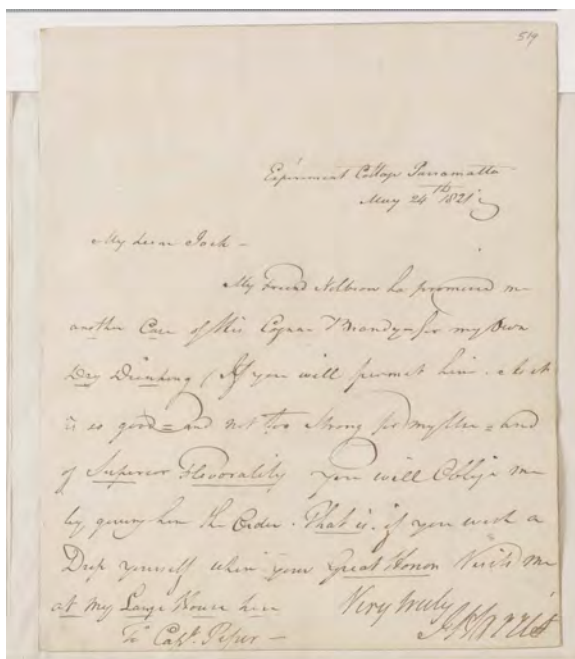
To a large extent the general public is unaware of the lack of involvement of historians in conservation practise or the low level of their engagement, when it does occur. Despite the methodological strictures in the Burra Charter for research, more often than not, when heritage studies are undertaken there is the claim that there are inadequate funds for more than the most basic historical research. With conservation projects usually managed by physical fabric specialists there is often only superficial or no engagement with historians, with funding used as the excuse. Thus the findings are qualified with this blanket caveat and a heavy reliance is placed on physical inspection and the opinion of architects, archaeologists or other fabric specialists, with little substantiation of their opinions required. There is rarely an opportunity for potentially conflicting documentary evidence to be put forward, let alone explored. History is only theoretically acknowledged as essential to the underpinning of conservation work. Under best practise principles there should be no intervention, other than prevention of deterioration, unless underpinned by the application of sophisticated historical skills such as the interpretation and evaluation of evidence in its historical context. Such engagement with history would reveal the appropriate application of the material to the problem at hand, but can entail lengthy digressions to understand for example, the appointment of magistrates in Parramatta in the 1820s or the new 'grants without purchase' regulations, later in the decade. Sadly, often the real issue is the prioritisation of funds and the bias of those allocating them.

The National Trust (N.S.W), as custodian of so many heritage properties and as the institution where many practitioners get their start in heritage work, needs to seriously review its standards of practise and its decision making processes, including its engagement with historians and communities. This is crucial, not only for the sake of the properties it manages but because of the flow on effect into heritage practices across the state.

The 1835/1795 error is inexcusable because its potential importance was well known, and publicly and vociferously argued. What has happened at *Experiment Farm Cottage* has occurred, and continues to occur elsewhere, despite state and national heritage legislation and subscriptions to ICOMOS and its charter. Heritage management bodies across New South

Wales, specifically the Department of Planning and the Department of Environment and Climate Change, as well as the numerous other government departments responsible for thousands of publicly owned heritage items, such as the Roads and Traffic Authority, RailCorp, State Forests, Sydney Water, the Education Department and the Department of Health also need to review their application of the Burra Charter and their commissioning of projects. The issue of inadequate funding for engagement with historians needs to be addressed by these bodies. The NSW Heritage Act is quite useless if the funding is not provided to government departments and instrumentalities to meet their heritage obligations under the Heritage Act. Unfortunately, with on-going pressures to meet their core responsibilities in health, education or transport, heritage is seen by managers as a low priority, the more so because only in highly exceptional circumstances is it likely to headline the evening news. The public, however, deserves to have confidence that what is claimed for our cultural places is founded on a clear, unbiased, multi-disciplinary evidence-based investigation, with anomalies openly acknowledged. There is a need for shared multi-disciplinary intellectual and professional responsibility to ensure an authentic and credible outcome for precious community resources.

The dating of *Experiment Farm Cottage* to either the 1790s or the 1830s and the processes by which that has been determined matter a great deal if there is to be any real authority in what is presented to ourselves and the world as our cultural heritage. It matters a great deal because it fundamentally alters the way that Australians understand their early colonial past. To get it so wrong is an impoverishment and a cheapening of that past, brought about by a failure to use recognised methodologies, multi-disciplinary teams and by paying only lip service to basic standards of heritage practise.



An 1821 letter written by Harris from *Experiment Cottage*, Parramatta – well before its accepted existence by the National Trust. MSLNSW: Piper Papers, Vol.1. A254

Sue Rosen's *Australia's Oldest House: Surgeon John Harris and Experiment Farm Cottage* is published by Halstead Press, Sydney (\$37.95 rrp). Signed copies are available from the author at srosen@haah.com.au for \$37.95 plus postage.

Royal Botanic Gardens Workshop

Dorothy Kass

On 25 March a small group of PHA members enjoyed a specially conducted tour of the Library by Miguel Garcia, Library Technician. Miguel, who had prepared a display of historically significant items from the collection, explained that the Library had been established under the directorship of Charles Moore in 1852, and was thus the second scientific library in Australia, after that of the Australian Museum. The collection contains not only books and printed documents, but pictures, photographs, maps, and realia. It complements the specimens held by the Herbarium in the same building.

Miguel showed us several rare books dating from the 19th century, and earlier, many being first editions, and some the only known copy in Australia. Some reveal interesting provenance, such as the first edition of *The Origin of the Species*, specifically dedicated to the Gardens and signed by Charles Darwin. There is also a book owned and inscribed by William Wools. Beautiful hand coloured illustrations grace the pages of many of these early books.

Rare, old, and fragile items are housed in a special room of the Library, whilst recent materials are on open access. Sixty per cent of the older material remains accessible only through the card catalogue, but is gradually being added to the on-line catalogue. The Library primarily supports the staff of the Botanic Gardens Trust, but its valuable material is available to outside researchers by appointment. Miguel offers his assistance to historians who are interested in the collection.

The history of the Royal Botanic Gardens was profoundly influenced by two long serving directors: Charles Moore, from 1848 to 1896; and Joseph Henry Maiden, from 1896 to 1924. The work of Margaret Flockton, employed as illustrator from 1901 to 1927, is of particular relevance to the collection. Her beautiful illustration of published books and herbarium specimens has become a focal reference within the collection, whilst her employment and contribution to the Gardens is also of historical significance.

The Herbarium collection numbers 1.2 million specimens, contained in boxes, and referenced in a comprehensive data base. The boxes, explained Miguel, contained more than just specimens, often including paper documents, illustrations, photographs, and even incidental but now valuable evidence such as the newspaper in which the specimens were originally wrapped.

After the tour of the Library, Dr Jodi Frawley spoke of her use of the Library in researching her thesis about Joseph Maiden and the Gardens. As we walked through the Gardens, Jodi connected various plantings and sections to the historical development of the Gardens and the work of Moore and Maiden. The walk concluded with a pleasant lunch on the lower lawns of the beautiful Botanic Gardens.



LIBRARY REPORT

Compiled by Terri McCormack, Honorary Librarian

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PHA NEWSLETTERS

CIRCA: the Journal of Professional Historians. Professional Historians Association (Vic) Inc. No 1, 2010

What can we say but the heartiest of congratulations to the Victorian PHA for producing this magnificent journal? Maybe there's some envy too as it's an idea that's been floated in NSW but the Victorians have carried it through. Much of the hard work was done by its editor, the indefatigable Katherine Sheedy. *Circa* was launched with great fanfare by author Helen Garner on 10 March 2010 at the City Museum at Old Treasury, which, ironically and sadly, closed down four days later.

The journal is indeed a triumph for PHA (Vic) and a showcase of the work of professional historians. It includes brief biographies of the ten contributors as well as lots of great images. Sections entitled Explorations, Discoveries, and Reflections include articles on oral history and the media, problems in writing biography, the brief life of digitally created records, the struggle for female franchise in Victoria, battlefield pilgrimages to Malaya, Aboriginal prisons on Rottnest Island, and much more.

PHAROS: Professional Historians Association (Vic) Inc. No 61, Dec 2009; No 62, Feb/Mar 2010; No 63, Apr/May 2010

Naturally the launch of *Circa* is the biggest event on the PHA (Vic) calendar for this year but they have also been busy with other projects. Fay Woodhouse, for instance, contributed a biographical piece on the Melbourne University Vice-Chancellor Raymond Priestley to *Circa* and also published two books: *Vintage Stories: A 150 year history of Tahbilk* and *Altona Yacht Club: a history of community sailing*.

The *Historically Speaking* program for 2010 is as packed as ever. It includes a visit to the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre, Alternative Uses of History (exploring the potential of oral history), an exploration of Melbourne Icons, the writing of biographies and life stories, and Heritage Victoria's framework of historic themes for the assessment of heritage items.

In the Feb/March issue, Megan Sheehy from Museum Victoria contributed a timely article about making history online via such virtual community sites as YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, blogs and Twitter. She fears much of their history will be lost by an older generation who lack the will or ability to upload their stories and images to this Web 2.0 environment. As examples of the successful use of these mediums to engage new audiences, she cites the inclusion of the National Library's *Picture Australia* on Flickr and the *Now and Then* community heritage project developed by the Collections Council of Australia. The latter used wiki technology to create an online community of shared historical resources based on the town of Mallala in South Australia. To see what can be done with modern technology, check out these two examples of online history communities at www.flickr.com/groups/PictureAustralia_ppe/ and www.nowandthen.net.au/

PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION (SA) Inc – incorporating News from the PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION (NT) Inc. – Newsletter.
No 96, December 2009

The major ongoing project of the PHA (SA) is the 175th Anniversary Website, edited by Brian Dickey and Susan Marsden, to showcase writings of PHA members on the history of South Australia. Unhappily, the State Government is showing less enthusiasm for their 2011 foundation celebration despite submissions from the PHA, History Council of SA, and the History Trust of South Australia.

PHA President Geoff Speirs provided an overview of the 18th State History Conference – ‘History from the Ground Up’. Keynote speakers were Professor Philip Payton (‘Making Moonta’s Myth’) and Professor Eric Richards (‘Yorke Peninsula and the British Diaspora’), both of whom relied heavily on local sources like newspapers and family histories. Several PHA members contributed and the conference was enhanced by several field trips, and a dinner and choral concert at Wallaroo Town Hall.

The 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s birth was appropriately and enjoyably celebrated in the Northern Territory by a cruise around Port Darwin tracing the course of the *Beagle*. The occasion also marked the 170th anniversary of the naming of the Port of Darwin and was a joint effort by the Charles Darwin University, the History Society of the NT, and the History Council of the NT with historical input from PHA members Emeritus Professor Alan Powell and Dr Bev Phelts.

Having been the grateful recipient of Barbara James’ research knowledge and generosity of spirit while working in Darwin, I’m delighted to note that the Historical Society of the Northern Territory has nominated her as a person worthy of having a suburb named after her. Before her untimely death in 2003, she wrote several pivotal NT histories, including *No Man’s Land: women of the Northern Territory*, and co-edited the second volume of the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*. The PHA (NT) is proud to be associated with The Barbara James Memorial Prize, awarded annually through Charles Darwin University. Her friends know how supportive she’d be of this encouragement to students to further the cause of history and conservation in the Territory.

Another NT historian who has been generous with research assistance is Dr Mickey Dewar, formerly of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Her book *In Search of the Never-Never* (NTU Press, 1997) is a fascinating exploration of the Australian identity through Northern Territory literature. She has now joined us in the world of freelance public history and her profile in this issue indicates that she’s much in demand. As a recipient of the 2007 Frederick Watson Fellowship from the National Archives of Australia, she is, *inter alia*, working on a history of housing in Darwin in the 1950s.

NON-PHA PUBLICATIONS

HERITAGE NSW: Quarterly Newsletter of the NSW Heritage Office. Vol 17, No 2, Summer 2009

Thousands pass it every day on their way to the bus and ferry terminals at Circular Quay without realising it is the second oldest surviving European monument in Australia. The earliest in an 1811 obelisk erected by Lachlan Macquarie’s regiment at Watsons Bay to mark the completion of the South Head Road. The sandstone Obelisk at Macquarie Place was designed by convict architect Francis Greenway and erected in 1818. It was the geographical marker from where all public roads in the colony were measured. The lead article in this issue of *Heritage* describes it as ‘a symbolic peg indicating the furthest extent of the British Empire in the Antipodes’. It is believed to be based on the Georgian Obelisk by Beau Nash in Bath, England. The article contains some nice images featuring the Obelisk and also other Macquarie Place monuments. The Obelisk has been deteriorating over its 190 years and has recently been undergoing major conservation treatment by the City of Sydney.

Other articles in this issue focus on recollections of the 1902 Mount Kembla mine disaster, tourists at Maitland Gaol, remains of the 1893 wreck of the *Buster* revealed at Woolgoolga Beach, a personal account of the 1942 submarine attack on Sydney, and the Youth Hostel at the Rocks recently opened on an archaeological site.

Parents looking for somewhere to take the kids – or grandkids – for the next school holidays should check the *NSW Heritage Tourism Online* website. Among the 500 recommended State Heritage listed places are North Head Quarantine Station, Museum of Fire at Penrith, Wing Hing Long & Co at Tingha, Fort Scratchley at Nobby's Head, the Grave of Thomas Mitchell's tracker Yuranigh near Molong, and Saumarez Homestead near Armidale.

HISTORY AUSTRALIA: Journal of the Australian Historical Association. Volume 6, Number 2, August 2009; Number 3, December 2009

As always, these journals contain a wealth of historical material by academic and public historians that is too extensive to be detailed here. It is all available online at the Monash University ePress site: www.epress.monash.edu

HISTORY COUNCIL OF NSW. Bulletin. Spring 2009

School history curriculums have been much in the news lately but not much is being said about universities. In an edited article headed 'Historical Thinking in Higher Education' (published in full in *History Australia* Dec 2009), nine prominent academics discuss the findings of a 2008 national scoping study of student and staff perceptions of historical thinking. One disturbing outcome was the history students' clear preference for secondary sources, despite being introduced to rich primary source materials. The authors recommend encouraging the use of primary sources in secondary education to highlight the importance of engaging critically with the evidence from the past. Students also ranked highly the benefits of interactions with teachers, particularly outside the classroom, indicating that online activities alone were not contributing to the development of historical thinking. The study concludes that students arrive at university without a clear idea of what skills and abilities a history degree can provide.

This Bulletin also contains two obituaries: Bruce Mitchell (1935-2009) from the University of New England, an expert in labour history and the history of education, contributed greatly to the understanding of local and regional history in the New England area. Margaret Holmes (1909-2009) was a feminist and peace activist from the time she graduated from the University of Sydney in 1933, campaigning against apartheid in South Africa, Aboriginal inequity, nuclear weapons, and the Vietnam War. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2001 for her work towards peace and justice.

To celebrate the Macquarie Bicentenary in 2010, the History Council of NSW and the Historic Houses Trust are co-presenting a series of lectures throughout 2010 exploring the legacy of Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie. The next, sponsored by the City of Sydney, is on Thursday 20 May 2010 from 9.30 am to 5.30am at the Museum of Sydney. Entitled Visions of Sydney Symposium, it will explore 200 years of urban planning with talks from prominent historians Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, Dr Grace Karskens, Professor Robert Freestone and Dr Paul Ashton, followed by an overview of the City of Sydney's 2030 Vision by Bridget Smyth. Cost: General \$90.00, Concession/Member \$75.00. Contact: 02 9252 8715 or office@historycouncilnsw.org.au

MEMENTO: News from the National Archives. No 38, January 2010

A very lanky Stanley Melbourne Bruce dominates the cover of this issue. Termed 'Australia's forgotten Prime Minister'(1923-1929), he is profiled in a leading article by Dr David Lee, Director of the Historical Publications and Information Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Behind the Bruce enigma, claims Lee, is a complex and fascinating man – a sportsman, soldier, anti-union politician, and diplomat.

And now for something really unusual, a world tour in 1925 by the Australian Scottish Ladies Pipe Band! It was the first of its kind in the world and Julia Child describes her use of NAA records to examine the background to the tour. Problems encountered, apart from the inevitable sexism, was the lack of finance and the refusal of the government to issue passports to underage band members. Contrary to expectation, the ladies caused a sensation wherever they went – and that included New Zealand, England, and Scotland where they were the first women's band to play before the British King and Queen.

Dr Kate Bagnall has been interested in Chinese-Australian families for many years, especially in Australian women with Chinese partners and their children. One such story is that of Jimmie Minahan, born of mixed parentage in Victoria and brought up in the village of Shek Quey Lee in Guangdong. Using the extensive immigration records in National Archives as well as visits to his birthplace and Chinese village, Kate has traced his life. On his return to Australia at the age of 31, he, like so many other Australian-born Chinese, felt the full weight of the Immigration Restriction Act. Although he failed the obligatory dictation test, a subsequent landmark case in the High Court ruled in his favour. The NAA files on the case revealed much about the dual lives of mixed Chinese families. Kate continues to search for Jimmie Minahan after he was permitted to re-enter his country.

At this time of year when yet again we ponder the enigma of Anzac Day, an article by Dr Marina Larsson of La Trobe University is pertinent. Based on WW 1 veterans' repatriation medical files, she has investigated the stories of ex-servicemen's families in the 1920s and 1930s who were burdened with the care of their returned relatives. Children were brought up with shell-shocked fathers, households survived on meagre pensions, and many families had to endure the lingering deaths of those who finally succumbed to war wounds. There was financial support for repatriation hospitals but little for family carers. "For thousands of Australian families", writes Larsson, "the 1918 Armistice marked the end of the war but signalled the start of many years of caring for their war-damaged soldiers".

VOICEPRINT: Newsletter of the NSW Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia. No 42, April 2010

If, like me, you have some old oral history cassettes lying around that you've been meaning to digitise, you'd better get a move on as the tapes could already be deteriorating. Concerned about the audio tapes used to record their oral history in 1991, the Sydney Engineering Heritage Committee has embarked on digitising its collection at the State Library of NSW to produce the material on hard disk drives and archive quality DVDs. This has already been done with collections at the Sydney Opera House, Stanton Library at North Sydney, and Shoroc (Mosman Manly Warringah) libraries, and is in progress at the NSW Department of Technology, Services and Administration (formerly Public Works).

For those who missed the Oral History seminar last November, edited versions of the talks are included in this issue. Margo Beasley, Oral Historian at the City of Sydney, spoke of an ongoing project, initiated by the late oral historian Richard Raxworthy, that focuses on Sydney's small retail businesses, their heritage buildings, and their social history. Familiar names (to some of us at least) include Mick Smith and Sons Gun Store, Sol Levy Tobacconist, Cornelius Furs and its famous clients, and Sharpie's Golf House at Haymarket. Entitled 'Open all Hours: Commerce and work in the City of Sydney', this will be the City of Sydney's flagship oral history project and will be following by others on the city's website.

The other seminar speaker was Anna Cossu, Curator of the Susannah Place museum in the Rocks. She spoke of the contribution made to the interpretation of the museum by interviews with former residents of the building. The oral history program has enabled the museum not only to furnish the premises authentically but also to tell evocative stories of the place and its history over time. As one of the former tenants said, 'the voice'll put the colour in it'.

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The Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc is the organisation representing qualified historians in NSW and ACT who are professionally employed or commissioned to undertake historical work.

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