

## Australian Archaeology



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REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE ON HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY  
AND THE NATIONAL ESTATE

INTRODUCTION

During an informal meeting with Mr David Yencken, Chairman of the Interim Committee of the National Estate, in late September 1974, discussion touched upon the difficulties of developing a comprehensive list of sites of historical importance, as referred to in the *Report of the National Estate*. As a result, Professor D.J. Mulvaney, assisted by Dr Isabel McBryde and Dr Jim Allen, proposed and proceeded to organise a meeting of people known by us to be interested in the subject. The ensuing *Conference on Historical Archaeology and the National Estate*, funded by Department of Urban and Regional Development and held under the auspices of the A.N.U. took place on 7-9 December in Bruce Hall, A.N.U., Canberra.

The first important point to emerge was the ready response of invitees. Of 39 individuals invited, 34 attended and two of the five unable to attend provided useful information and comments. The organisers considered this a pertinent reflection of the growing interest and concern with the subject of the conference.

Invitations were deliberately restricted to individuals rather than organisations but representatives of a wide range of interests were present, including four universities, four state museums, several National Trust groups, National Parks, Historical Societies and conservation groups. Thus while sectional interests and various points of view were informally represented, participants were freed from representational constraints, and the resulting dialogue proved highly productive and highly stimulating to the participants.

One important point requiring elucidation is the term 'historical archaeology' as used in the title of this conference, since its implications and ramifications were unclear to a number of participants who were not archaeologists, and who felt that the term implied a primary concern with only the excavation of historic sites. In fact, within the ranks of professional archaeologists in this country the term is employed to differentiate

investigations relating to the period for which there is an historic record from those purely prehistoric in nature. The links between the prehistoric and historic archaeology are firstly the primary concern with field evidence - sites, structures and artefacts - as a basic data source, and secondly the similarity of skills needed to handle such data. Whereas the prehistoric archaeologist needs to be versed in other basic skills (or have access to other specialist scientists) in such fields as geomorphology, palaeontology, or palynology, the historical archaeologist requires parallel skills or professional assistance with documentary research, engineering or architecture for example. It was in these terms that the convenors of the conference, all archaeologists, adopted the title, and thus the expression was assumed to imply the discipline in this broad fashion. Historical archaeology is here defined as the combined use of a wide range of data sources and research techniques to interpret the material cultural remains of man in this country since the beginnings of recorded history; such remains include the full range of sites from living buildings to sites with no visible evidence above ground; the purpose of historical archaeological research is historical elucidation on a wider front than can be achieved from documentary sources alone. It thus encompasses what is known in Britain as "industrial archaeology", in the same fashion as "historic sites archaeology" does in North America. It can, and often does involve excavation as a research technique, but need not necessarily do so. In any one situation the dominant research tool might be documentary enquiry, architectural recording, or engineering history; in others, combinations of these and other skills might be employed.

The distinction between historic sites per se, and historic buildings of architectural importance or possessing important historical associations is a hazy one; the *Report of the National Estate* devotes an entire chapter to buildings "which reflect the country's cultural history" but gives over additional

space elsewhere to include as historic sites "buildings which may be of archaeological and also of historic or other significance". The borders of interest between historical buildings and historical archaeology also caused some confusion amongst the participants at the conference. In our view the division between buildings and sites created in the *Report of the National Estate*, while useful at legal levels of site protection, is confusing and damaging in terms of survey and scholarship. We believe that both areas of interest are specialised aspects of a continuous concern, for which there is a considerable merging at the centre.

The proceedings of the conference were recorded on tape in case some later record was required. Because the conference was loosely structured, and because neither the organisers nor the invited participants had any really clear idea what might emerge from the meeting a formal report was not envisaged in the beginning; the need for one arose as the meeting developed. In presenting this report we have had to rely on transcripts of tapes made difficult to work from by extraneous noise and the availability of only a single microphone during the meeting. We are extremely grateful to Mrs Lesley Beattie and Miss Peggy Cole of the Department of Prehistory, A.N.U., who spent many laborious hours transcribing the tapes.

Preparing this report has required considerable editing of the taped discussions. In attempting to weld the mass of spoken comments into some form of comprehensive statement we have found it necessary to emphasise some aspects and omit others. Speakers are identified in some instances but not in others. We apologise in advance if unwittingly we have misrepresented or distorted points of view, or if our emphases are not those of other participants.

The procedure at the conference was to begin each session with one or more speakers presenting a short formal paper on a specific subject and then allowing the majority of time for discussion. In this report the principle thematic divisions of the conference have been maintained as closely as possible.

## Part I The Interim Committee of the National Estate

Mr David Yencken, Chairman of the Interim Committee of the National Estate, began the conference by outlining the history of the Inquiry into the National Estate and what had emerged from it. The following account was written for this report by Mr Yencken after the conference.

### Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate

The Australian Government set up a Committee of Inquiry in April 1973 under the Chairmanship of Mr Justice Hope to examine and report on the nature and state of the National Estate (heritage sites), and to recommend what action should be taken to protect and manage the National Estate. The Committee of Inquiry completed its work early in 1974 and its report was eventually tabled in Parliament by Mr Tom Uren in August 1974. (The report, which has been highly commended, is available from the Australian Government Printer at approx. \$9.50 a copy.)

### Interim Committee

The Australian Government accepted the Committee of Inquiry's findings in principle and moved immediately to establish an Interim Committee as recommended by the Committee of Inquiry. The Interim Committee consists of an independent Chairman, eight independent citizens, seven heads of departments, and two ministerial advisers.

The Interim Committee has three main functions:

- 1) To advise the government on legislation for the permanent commission recommended by the Committee of Inquiry (The Australian Heritage Commission).
- 2) To advise the Ministers for Urban & Regional Development and Environment & Conservation on the allocation of grants under the National Estate programs for 1974/75.
- 3) To advise on any other matter related to the National Estate.

### Definition of National Estate

The National Estate was at this point defined to include all sites of heritage significance, both natural and cultural. Items and material in museums and collections were excluded from the responsibility of the Committee.

### National Estate Grants Program 1974/75

The 1974/75 program came in three sections:

- Grants to conservation bodies (Environment and Conservation) \$448,000
- National Estate grants (Urban and Regional Development) \$8,000,000
- National Estate grants (Environment and Conservation) (National Parks and nature reserves) \$9,000,000

### Policies and Objectives

The Committee first developed a general policy which attempted to set out the objectives towards which National Estate programs should be directed. The policy contained the following major components:

- Identification and classification of sites.
- Legal and physical protection.
- The development of new legal and administrative techniques.
- Restoration, maintenance, and management.
- Public education and information.
- Technical training.
- Other issues raised by the Committee of Inquiry (taxation, sandmining, woodchipping, etc.).

We are especially concerned with identification and classification and legal and physical protection as first priorities. The conference on historical archaeology is one of the activities we are sponsoring and supporting to find out how best to identify, classify, and better protect.

### Australian Heritage Commission

The Australian Government announced in January 1975 its intention to introduce a bill to establish the Australian Heritage Commission in the current session of parliament. The Commission

will have a similarly constructed membership (if not the same people) and will have as one of its primary functions the duty of establishing registers of sites of significance. Sites on the registers will receive special protection from actions, direct or indirect, of federal agencies.

### The Conference

What we would like to think might emerge from this conference are some directions for questions concerning:

- The identification and classification of historical archaeological sites.
- The manner of identifying and classifying.
- The adequacy of legislation.
- What might be done to improve the legislation.
- Any other issues related to identifying, protecting, or managing those sites.

## Part II Legislation

Following on from the discussion on the Interim Committee of the National Estate, it became clear that the interaction of any proposed Australian Heritage Commission and the protection of historic sites across Australia will depend upon necessary and sufficient legislation existing in all the States and Territories for the protection of such sites. It became obvious as discussion developed that legislation acted not only as a safeguard against the desecration and looting of sites, but as a positive basis from which to initiate public awareness, co-operation and participation in the protection of this area of the national heritage. Further to this it became clear that even amongst the participants of the conference there was uncertainty as to the legislative powers of the Australian Government *vis à vis* the States. To this end it is suggested that readers of this report refer to Chapter 7 of the *Report of the National Estate*, which deals with constitutional constraints. The following excerpts from that *Report* were not specifically offered at the conference, but are included here because of their relevance to the topics as discussed:

"Although Australia is a sovereign state - a status which it would seem the former Australian colonies did not have, and the present Australian States do not have - its national Parliament does not have plenary powers to legislate in respect of all matters for the whole of Australia. .... the greater part of the National Estate is within the States and so is subject to the legislative control of the States."

"The limitations of the powers of the States are generally not legal limitations: they are limitations such as the shortage of money; the lack of skilled personnel; the difficulty of doing some things on a State as opposed to a national basis .....

The extent of the legal capacity of the States and the limitations on their actual capacity form an important part of the setting....."



The *Report* goes on to point out that while the powers of the Parliament and of the Australian Government are limited in relation to those parts of the National Estate within the States, nevertheless the Australian Government retains certain powers to make laws and powers in respect of money.

Thus "its powers in relation to defence, postal, telegraphic, telephonic and similar services, lighthouses and customs duties, do not directly relate to the National Estate but may, by the manner of their exercise or by the manner of the exercise of powers incidental to them, have a very positive effect upon the conservation and presentation of the National Estate. There are throughout Australia defence installations, post offices, lighthouses, customs houses and stores which undoubtedly form part of the National Estate. By preserving these buildings, the Australian Government can give a strong impetus to the concept of the National Estate and to the policy of its preservation and enhancement. The point to make here is that there is no constitutional bar to the carrying out of this policy."

In respect of financial power, the Parliament "may grant financial assistance to any State on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit..... . A Commonwealth statute authorising a grant to a State upon specified conditions cannot compel the State to accept the grant. The State may reject it, but if it accepts the grant it is bound by the conditions. This is a wide power of the greatest importance..... ."

These short excerpts hopefully clarify the position: in any attempt to implement a national policy on the protection and preservation of the national heritage real legislative power lies with the States, but through financial assistance, the provision of skilled personnel and advice, and by example with historic sites on its own land, the Australian Government is well placed to encourage the enactment, and if necessary the enforcement of legislation within the States, in regard to the protection and preservation of the national heritage.

The conference heard reports on the following existing pieces of State and Territory legislation:

- 1) The South Australian Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Act,
- 2) The Northern Territory Native and Historical Objects Preservation Ordinance,
- 3) The Victorian Historic Buildings Act,
- 4) The Victorian Town and Country Planning Act (as amended in 1971),
- 5) The Western Australian Maritime Archaeology Act.

The first important point to emerge from these reports was that with the exception of the Western Australian Maritime Archaeology Act, each Act appeared to contain specific deficiencies which might be seen to be products of the piecemeal manner in which the Acts evolved. Thus in South Australia the legislation requires extension to cover shipwreck and industrial sites, and under the Victorian Act, although there are severe penalties (\$1,000 fine or 12 months imprisonment) preventing the alteration, removal or demolition of a designated building, at the same time the owner is not required personally to protect a building by keeping it locked or weatherproof. As well as imprecision in the legislations, site declarations are often lengthy procedures, staff everywhere appears to be short, and advisors to ministers implementing the acts are too often not expert in the field of historic sites. In the case of the Northern Territory, where the Ordinance is administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, although it was the earliest legislation of its kind in Australia, being introduced in the mid-1950's, so far only seven sites have been protected, and no prosecutions for misdemeanors under the Ordinance have been attempted. It was suggested that in certain instances, such as in South Australia where the Protector of Relics is also the Director of the State Museum, dual responsibilities could lead to a conflict of interests even where distinct legislation exists. In a number of other States, of course, no legislation pertaining to the protection of historic sites and works exists.

One interesting aspect of the implementation of the Western Australian Maritime Archaeology Act is that the advisory committee advising the Trustees of the Western Australian Museum on the proclaiming and protection of shipwreck sites under the Act, has the authority to recommend rewards between \$75 and \$5,000 for information leading to the discovery of new sites, an authority which has been used, for example, in connection with the discovery in 1969 of the English East Indiaman 'Trial', wrecked in 1622. In that instance an *ex gratia* payment of \$2,000 was made. This scheme thus not only encourages the diving community to look for underwater sites (which they would do in any case) but also encourages them to report their finds rather than clandestinely loot the site, and provides the opportunity for the marine archaeologists to involve these divers in the protection process, site recording, and ongoing archaeological research.

One point which occasioned much discussion but little concensus was whether or not any single piece of State legislation should attempt to cover both historical and Aboriginal sites. Arguments for containing both under a single Act included the political need to recognise that both sorts of site are parts of a continuum and not different entities; that some sites are both 'Aboriginal' and 'historical'; that Aboriginal and historic remains can occur on the same site; and that conflict and duplication could occur if separate Acts were being administered by separate bodies. A strong argument to the contrary was that as has already been seen in practice, under any single Act one or other field was likely to suffer. It was generally felt that the likelihood of any single administrator being sufficiently proficient in both areas was extremely remote, particularly in view of the urgent need to extend such legislation to include industrial and maritime situations.

One solution to this problem appears to be to divide the advisory and administrative aspects of any legislation, so that each specialist area might be represented by a specialist

committee, each advising a single administrator. While there was not complete agreement to this suggestion, it did emerge as the most constructive one. The organisation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, where such a structure appears to work well was suggested as one model which might be closely studied in this respect, particularly as it had the added advantage of not proliferating public servants and increasing costs.

The concept of similar advisory committees operating on behalf of the proposed Australian Heritage Commission, both in a general advisory capacity and also perhaps judging grant applications was also put forward, while fully realising the difficulties of making recommendations to a Commission not yet in existence. It was stressed by David Yencken that such a Commission would be unlikely to hold executive powers, but rather would see itself as an advisory and funding body, but one with real status, spanning the entire scope of national heritage on an Australia-wide basis, and thus able to exert real influence upon State institutions. Specifically on questions of State legislation the Commission would very likely maintain a legal advisory service to review State legislations across the country and advise the States on aspects requiring greater legislative control.

It was agreed in discussion that members of the conference should seek to collate information on the deficiencies of existing State legislations and the drafting of model legislations in States which presently have none, and that this information could then be commented upon by the Interim Committee of the National Estate and returned to the members of the conference to enable private action on their part. The conference considered one area of extreme urgency to be that of the impending and increasing threat to shipwreck sites in Australian waters, apart from Western Australia, where the existing legislation covering such sites appears to be working well. It was recommended that other States, or the Australian Government, if it has the

constitutional powers to do so, should treat this aspect of the national heritage with extreme urgency, and that the Western Australian legislation should be examined as a possible model. A further recommendation concerned the urgent need for the Australian government to introduce legislation to protect historic sites and works in the Australian Territories.

### Part III From destruction to Disneyland

For decades the vestiges of earlier settlements and industries quietly deteriorated across the Australian landscape, of little interest in our external cultural gaze, except to the local historical societies, a small minority often considered somehow slightly eccentric. Exactly when or how or why the pendulum swung the other way is unclear, but swung it has. From the boom in 'Australiana' to the fashionability of Paddington terrace houses there has everywhere been an escalation of Australian cultural assertions. Ten years ago a few towns might boast a small, ill-kept 'folk museum'; today many millions of dollars are pouring into pioneer villages, reconstructions and restorations of whole towns, and tourist attractions of more fanciful imaginations. The proliferation of these things is alarming; indeed this conference might be seen as a reaction to many of the disturbing elements contained in the situation. Two sessions of the conference were given over to this subject and may be divided roughly into academic and political considerations. This section deals with the former, and the latter is reported in part IV of this document.

The discussion was opened by Anne Bickford's comments on two pieces of historical restoration. The first was the large-scale and expensive reconstruction and restoration programme in the East Rocks area of Sydney carried out by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, the second being a much smaller project funded by the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), the reconstruction of the chapel at Wybalenna on Flinders Island in Bass Strait, where Tasmanian Aborigines were resettled during the 1830's and 40's. Both examples were considered by the speaker to be illustrations of 'destructive restoration', Wybalenna chapel especially because of poor workmanship - no attempts were made for example even to match the size and colour of the bricks used - and also because surviving Tasmanian Aborigines are offended by the reason given for the reconstruction, that is, "as a memorial to the extinct race". In the case of the East Rocks restoration, objections revolved around insufficient planning and consultation,

and no real attempt at historical accuracy because the buildings involved had to be "viable", that is altered so that they might be functioning buildings when completed, so that in certain cases 'restore' had been taken to be a synonym for 'renovate'. In particular the speaker felt that an Australian Heritage Commission had to go beyond advising and funding roles to exercise more control over the ways the money with which they would be funding future projects was spent. Highly detailed, well planned submissions should be the first requirement.

Many points were raised in discussion. To begin with the restoration of buildings, the following summary of the discussion reflects what was a consensus of opinions.

While it was felt that restored buildings should often be used for a variety of purposes other than monuments or museums, uses should approximate most nearly the original uses of the building. While conceding that an old homestead might require modern plumbing, it was also stressed that all too often alterations or additions destroyed the historic character which had been the *raison d'etre* in the first place for seeking public funds for restoration. Worse still, to carry out careful restoration and then destroy a facade by adding striped canvas awnings, window flower boxes or neon signs, defeated its own purpose.

In many cases insufficient thought, planning, research and general expertise could be demonstrated. Any structure considered for restoration should be considered in terms of problems relating to that specific structure - its present condition, historical/architectural significance, impingement on the surrounding environment (or vice versa), the purpose for restoration and/or suggested re-use. In addition all restorations should consider the following general needs:

- a) As full historical research as possible, ranging from date of construction and initial builder, owner and purpose, to changing functions and recorded and observed structural alterations and additions. Historical significance should be assessed not only

in terms of the structure itself and its immediate social and historical significance but also in the context of its local history and environment.

- b) The possible usefulness of undertaking archaeological research to elucidate more fully such historical considerations. This would include not only excavations within the building and in the immediate surroundings to discover alterations and changes in foundations, and to recover associated artefacts; but also detailed examination and planning of the original structure, analyses of the building materials (stone, brick, timber, mortar, nails etc.) and the recording of building techniques. Restorations once completed will often obliterate or cover such evidence. Some restorations might require a replication of mortars, or hand-cut nails, or chemical replications of paints or washes. Modern techniques, mortars or surface finishes may in some cases hasten the destruction of original areas of work. (In this regard, the technical bulletins being prepared by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) were discussed and commended).
- c) The need to locate and support craftsmen capable of such work who have the knowledge, or who can learn the techniques required.
- d) In many cases preservation of a ruin may be more acceptable than restoration, particularly when such restoration is little more than guesswork.

On the question of controlling projects funded by an Australian Heritage Commission one constructive suggestion was that initial research and a defence of why restoration should follow certain lines might be required in some publishable form in advance of the work. Not only would this obviate the situation described by Anne Bickford where criticisms and defences of the East Rocks restorations took place without satisfactory conclusion in the Sydney press, since more informed criticism could be made in advance of work commencing; but also it would provide a detailed



account of the restoration, itself an historical act, and an important source of information in the educative role, which in turn is perhaps the most important aspect in all such restorations. There would certainly be no difficulty in an Australian Heritage Commission applying these sorts of conditions to some or all of its grants. It might also be the case that grants be not approved unless the various consultants involved are named and approved beforehand.

In relation to folk museums and pioneer villages, it was generally agreed that the removal of houses, other structures and machinery to such places is likely to create many ills; these include firstly the historical reality which is likely to be lost, by the loss of the original environment surrounding the structure (and conversely, the destruction of the original environment by the loss of the structure); secondly, the real possibility of hastening the deterioration or destruction both by physically moving it and by failing to protect it against a variety of new environmental conditions at its relocation point; thirdly, the loss of historical evidence by improper or insufficient investigation and recording at the time of collection. Without full written records and with changes of ownership of private museums only a short time is required to lose all but the most general information concerning even large transposed buildings.

It was, of course, agreed by members of the conference, that modern development could not and should not be diverted by the presence of historic sites of minor significance, and that in such cases the relocation of a structure or the salvage archaeology of a site were means of compromise. At the same time these alternatives were seen to be not ideal, and should not become the easy solution in every confrontation with development.

On the periphery of this subject there is the question of total reconstructions, both of individual houses and structures, and entire villages. In terms of any historical accuracy such reconstructions are most fraught with danger, particularly when they are competing to entice the paying visitor, and it was felt

most strongly that such operations had a low priority in attracting public money when so much money and effort were required to deal with the real historical aspects of the national heritage. Participants cited a number of bad examples, but on the other side of the ledger Judy Birmingham pointed to the amount of research which had gone into the creation of Old Sydney Town, and the spin-off this would have for historical sites research. Yet even at Old Sydney Town architectural accuracy is offset by the Disneyland concessions of "convict floggings" and "wenches (sic) fighting in front of the pub" at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. every day of the year. It was felt that not all tourists wanted such gaudy imitations of the past.

Two general points were agreed upon. The first is that any co-ordinated project into the historical sites aspect of the national heritage requires as one major priority investigation and preservation, and that this priority is of a higher order than restoration and certainly reconstruction. Thus the conference endorsed wholeheartedly the objective of the Interim Committee of the National Estate that a national register of sites be drawn up.

The second point was that the discussion had continued as in an ideal world, without necessary regard to the reality of the fact that in the fields of historical and marine archaeology and restoration architecture Australia is sadly lacking in the expertise with which we demand that these projects be undertaken. The necessity for training schemes in these fields was stressed here and is touched upon elsewhere in this report.

#### Part IV The Co-ordination of Goodwill

Hand in hand with the academic and moral problems of the investigation and preservation of historic sites in Australia are the political considerations which are more and more governing such development. John Mulvaney's apposite phrase which now heads this section of this report reflects both an achievement and a need. The achievement came during the conference, where the participants although initially suspicious rapidly agreed to shed regional, professional and positional biases in order to come to grips with, and seek solutions to the problems of historic sites in Australia, and the feeling that a good start was achieved. The need is to maintain this co-ordination of goodwill and expand it throughout all the government instrumentalities, institutions and individuals concerned with historical sites in Australia. As with the academic aspects, there was much criticism of the political aspects, but in general such criticism was intended to be constructive rather than destructive.

Three formal contributions were offered. John Mulvaney suggested that the sudden burst of governmental goodwill and generous funding in this field is producing a dangerous form of bureaucratic competition between a large number of Federal and State government departments and instrumentalities, which does reflect a lack of sufficient co-ordination between them, and what is worse, an insufficient long term understanding of the social implications of their actions. Another problem relates to the spin-off of success. Mulvaney pointed to the Swan Hill Folk Museum, which had achieved enormous early success because it had been the first large scale folk museum in Australia. Its success had altered the economic basis of Swan Hill much more towards tourism, but now, again supported with public funding, museums developing similar themes have been started at Jeparit and Warracknabeal. The three museums thus not only compete for exhibits, and are rapidly denuding the countryside of artefacts, but they are also, because of their proximity, competing for the same tourist dollar. With the

economic recession and the mosquitoes, Swan Hill this year is under pressure. This is not an isolated case, and as the numbers of museums grow, the competition between them reinforces the need for bigger, better and more fanciful attractions, which can only increase the problems of conservation and documentation of historic artefacts. While most participants at the conference did not object to public funds being used for the development of this aspect of private enterprise, it was stressed that governments need to recognise that their responsibilities do not end with the establishment of such museums. The continuing problems of maintenance and competition now seem likely to force the closure of some tourist museums in the future, and governments involved in their initial development have to recognise a responsibility for the protection of artefacts sold or discarded in such cases.

The discussion provided more examples of thoughtless government actions, for example the case of the Flinders anchors, which had managed to create ill-will in almost every direction, but the concerted point of the discussion was the need for all funding bodies to agree to a common list of priorities. It seems ridiculous that invaluable national treasures in The Australian Museum in Sydney cannot be protected from rain damage while millions of dollars are spent on "preposterous sorts of Disneylands", or that in Tasmania many thousands of dollars can be spent developing a fanciful 'Aboriginal Stockade' around rock engravings, some of dubious authenticity, while in the same State the Mount Cameron West art site, one of the finest hunter/gatherer rock engraving sites in the world, and one of the few sites in Australia worthy of world heritage classification, has had to be buried under tons of sand since there are no funds to carry out its proper protection. It was felt that if government funding instrumentalities worked more closely and in concert, many of these hazards could be overcome in the initial stages of projects, and that it did require these agencies to recognise that their responsibilities went beyond the Father Christmas syndrome of merely handing out the loot.

Helen Proudfoot spoke more specifically on the question on how the machinery of any Australian Heritage Commission would be

likely to operate. It would seem probable that any such Commission would not seek to involve itself in the administration of funds, but would prefer to pass on funds to others to see that the funds are spent wisely and that projects are carried out. This would immediately involve State governments because the funds are given on a Treasury to Treasury basis, and because normally the machinery exists in the States to translate the programmes into reality. It is at this point, as has been seen in the section on legislation, that the States may reject funding because of the conditions attached. One way to avert this problem is to have the initial submission come through the State, so that it is seen as State initiative, and so that the Australian government (through the Commission) would find itself in the position it wants to be in. The weakness of this system is that it forces individuals and small groups seeking funds into becoming pressure groups within the States to force State governments to forward their submissions. While in later questioning it became clear that individuals and groups could put submissions directly to the Commission, Mrs Proudfoot felt that private submissions competing with State sponsored ones would be disadvantaged, particularly as the administration of the funds required auditing, and had to be administered through an incorporated body. Protection of individual submissions against these bureaucratic shortcomings was needed if the system was to stay honest.

David Yencken defended the system, however, and pointed out that while all the State Governments had made submissions this year (1974-75) the Interim Committee's recommendations for grants included more than 50% for projects proposed by private submissions or for projects which the Interim Committee of the National Estate wished to sponsor. In addition the State Governments had been persuaded to accept the grants for these projects.

A second major weakness with this system is that the process of formulation of a project, submission to a State government, submission to the Commission, evaluation, approval, and allocation of funds, transfer of funds from the Federal Treasury to the State Treasury, then to the organisation involved is so cumbersome as to be unworkable within a financial year. Commenting on this David Yencken was in full agreement that an alternative, whether triennial

budgetting or some other alternative, had to be found. Finally Mrs Proudfoot criticised what she called the 'project mentality' of funding specific isolated projects without a definite programme or overall policy on the uses to which these projects are eventually to be put. Here again it was felt that an Australian Heritage Commission has to take responsibility within its legal powers for a cohesive research policy beyond the production of a national sites register. It is in this sense that decision making power is in the public domain, since any Australian Heritage Commission will depend upon public submissions, criticisms and comments to define and refine the frame of reference and priorities within which the Commission will work.

David Yencken again pointed out that the Interim Committee of the National Estate had prepared a general policy and set of objectives before considering grant applications. This policy would be set forth in the Interim Committee's report to be published in 1975.

David Hutchison reported on the state of co-ordination in Western Australia, where despite the limitations of expertise, staff and money, the levels of interaction between the Museum, Library, Archives, Art Gallery, National Trust and other institutions with a common interest in the area of historic sites and artefacts is quite high. A State policy group at present co-ordinates submissions to the Interim Committee of the National Estate, but here again this group can be by-passed with direct submissions from individual groups within the State. Also the 1969 Act gave the Museum statutory powers in the area of history, and although there is no formal need to do so, the Western Australian Department of Tourism now normally consults the Museum when approached for subsidies by individuals to establish 'tourist museums'.

In addition the Western Australian Museum now has statutory authority to establish Branch museums and to recognise Municipal museums. Branch museums are planned for major centres of population, and will be given much autonomy. The Fremantle Branch opened in 1970, and the Albany Branch will open in 1975. Each has its own committee of management comprising local people, with the exception of a Trustee of the Western Australian Museum. To be recognised, a

Municipal museum must appoint a curator, honorary or paid, who will be given a training course at the Western Australian Museum; this course includes recording methods and some simple conservation instruction. The committees of these museums are locally appointed, but must include the Director of the Western Australian Museum or his deputy, and a representative of the Director-General of Education, usually a local schoolteacher. The policy of the Western Australian Museum is not one of Big Brother, and no pressure is applied to local museums to seek recognition. Once recognised however, items from the State collection may be deposited there and this is being done. In 1973 the Western Australian Museum held its first conference for local museums, where museums not recognised, as well as those who are, were invited. Despite minor administrative problems the scheme appears to be working well, and is a hopeful illustration of co-ordination.

The discussion widened the question of co-ordination to include Adult Education groups and historical and archaeological societies around the country as excellent sources of local information, particularly in the formation of a national register of sites. The dangers of the destruction of sites at the hands of enthusiastic amateurs was clearly recognised, but it was generally agreed that the best manner of co-ordinating such people was not to belittle their efforts and try to curtail them, but rather to channel them more productively. Dr Cumpston regretted the gulf which existed between amateurs and professionals, be they academics, museum people or National Parks and Wildlife employees, and thought that some common meeting ground should be provided to assist co-ordination on an equal footing. As a result of this it was suggested that a national convention of historical societies and related bodies might take place, and this idea was later incorporated into the recommendations of the conference. The members of the conference also agreed to offer themselves as a resource and information pool to the Interim Committee of the National Estate and to provide that Committee with names of other individuals who might contribute further expertise.

Through the good offices of David Yencken, Mr Nevin Ellis, of the Australian government's Department of Tourism and Recreation visited the conference during its third day to hear some of the opinions expressed in this section reiterated. As a result of this meeting the conference was requested to nominate two delegates to attend a meeting of the heads of appropriate state and national government departments to be held in April 1975, to express these points of view.



## Part V A National Register of Sites

From the beginning of the conference there was a general acceptance of the idea that a nationwide inventory of sites was required and that such an inventory should have a high priority in any programme of an Australian Heritage Commission. Some participants felt that such an inventory was of paramount importance and had to be carried out in a completely systematic fashion to avoid the dangers of favourite or well-known sites obscuring the total view, and that follow-up work, be it excavation, restoration or detailed documentation should depend upon the results of such a systematic survey. Rhys Jones spoke against this point of view, arguing that it was not necessary to locate and list every minor historical site in Australia before initiating projects on any of them. On the contrary, it was equally necessary while such an inventory was being drawn up, to launch one or more major co-ordinated projects on a long-term basis. Such projects he argued would do far more to maintain the impetus established by the Interim Committee of the National Estate in historic sites research than site listing could ever hope to do; it could rapidly and dramatically demonstrate to the public what could be done at a professional level to preserve and present the national heritage, and would thus act as a forceful *raison d'etre* for the site survey programme; if left until the completion of the site listing, Australia would be left that many years behind other countries involved in historical archaeology; if begun now such projects would generate various kinds of professional expertise so sorely lacking in this country. This would be achieved perhaps initially by importing expertise, but would also provide the arena to train and develop local experts. The speaker conceived that one such project might take perhaps a decade to conclude, and would be costly, but the experience gained would then be directed to other projects in the country and would thus maintain and develop its own impetus. Jones suggested *Transportation in Tasmania: The Imposition of an Industrial Technology on a Savage Landscape* as one topic with the required scope, which raised a few parochial hackles around the room. But Welsh rhetoric won the day and the suggestion of investigating major topics was incorporated into a conference recommendation.

Nonetheless much time and discussion went into the question of a site inventory. Eva Rosander spoke on the Swedish programme, where historic sites protection and recording are highly developed and the subject incorporated into school curricula. Sites are well protected by legislation, and a programme of site listing and survey begun in 1938 is expected to be completed by 1978, by which time some 500,000 sites will have been mapped, in addition to 10,000 registered historic buildings having been recorded. In latter years industrial sites have received much attention and as well, in the museums, a policy of collecting contemporary objects directly from the manufacturers is ensuring a representative cross-section of material history for the future. While in Sweden there is a watershed of 100 years before a site becomes legally historic, the speaker stressed the need for a similar policy to be pursued with buildings and works.

There is already implemented in Australia a site survey programme into Aboriginal sites. It is being implemented in the States, but the actual survey work is being carried out by people whose positions are funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Bob Edwards spoke on the experience of that programme over the eighteen months it had been in operation, the way it worked and the difficulties that had been encountered. His initial consideration was that regardless of how perfect existing legislation might be, or how extensive or well-equipped an organisation might exist, success is directly related to the quality and experience of those undertaking the programme. As well, the site survey was involved with the sensitive area of relations between State instrumentalities and the Australian government, which, depending on the State involved, was producing uneven results at a national level. Other difficulties included attracting and holding staff at site recorder level, and the need also to fund back-up services as well as the recorder positions in view of the reticence of the States to provide these services.

Much of the ensuing discussion revolved around the question of compensation for the private owners of sites and buildings which might be scheduled as part of the national heritage.

Miles Lewis spoke at length on this point, outlining some of the more fundamental problems involved. A policy of compensation would prove enormously expensive, particularly when the need to preserve services such as urban transport systems or sewerage pumping stations (often still integrated into city service networks) are to be considered. If compensation is not paid, such a policy depends on the argument that there already exist controls on rights to develop property, town planning controls, building regulation controls, and so on, and people will have to accept historic sites controls in the same way, and for the same reasons as these other controls - that the good of the community exceeds the freedom of the individual. This argument is logical, particularly in view of the fact that no betterment tax exists in Australia - an individual is not taxed when the value of his property increases due to zoning changes, and therefore is not entitled to be compensated for decreasing value - but there remain strict limits to it. For example it may be possible for an owner, once his development potential is curtailed, to have his property declared a public reserve, and force the government to purchase it at market value. Again there is the simple question of justice. Town planning controls apply to whole areas not individual buildings and sites. As the best solution Lewis advocated a system of transferring development potential, so that deprived of the opportunity to develop one site, the opportunity has to be offered to develop equally elsewhere. Such a solution is open to abuse, however, by owners seeking compensation where development of a site is neither intended nor, in some cases, desired.

There appear to be three alternatives to the problem. Firstly a blanket application of preservation controls without compensation, such as are applied in many European countries; secondly the development of techniques of preservation control which make allowance for compensation in certain situations; and thirdly by developing the facility for Government acquisition of sites.

It should be noted however that at least in some instances controls which single out a particular site for special consideration do generally carry compensation. The new Victorian Historic Buildings Act is an innovative solution because it gives no automatic rights of

compensation, but substitutes discretionary powers for the Minister, which include the waiving of rates or land taxes, the transfer of development potential, bestowing grants, or purchasing sites.

Isabel McBryde began the discussion on the criteria on which selection of sites for protection and inclusion in an inventory could be made. She offered two approaches, the first being the same sort of total protection and inclusion that Eva Rosander had described for Sweden, so that all sites older than a specified age or dating to before a chosen calendar year would be included; the second approach she termed the selective approach where qualitative criteria would have to be rigorously determined. The responsibility for this selection would be heavy indeed, as the decisions made now would affect the survival of historical evidence into the future and would thus to some degree be denying evidence for future reconstructions of Australian history. Alternatively, the question had to be asked whether total protection was a practical possibility. Was it so ambitious that by embarking on such a course of action nothing might be effectively preserved or recorded? Might the more prudent course be selectively to save what we considered was important for the future? The speaker outlined her criteria, and also pointed out that any criteria should be differentially applied to determine importance at the local, regional, national and perhaps international levels.

Much discussion followed on this subject, and eventually general agreement was reached on the following list as a possible framework for selective criteria:

1. The importance of the site in illuminating or illustrating the past; i.e. its value in providing material evidence for the reconstruction of the past (including aspects of social, economic and technological history not recorded in historical literature), or its value in terms of material documentation of the recorded past.
2. The educational value of the site and the role it could play in school, university or public education.

3. The association of the site with historic events or individuals; such sites including natural areas as well as structures and monuments.
4. The emotive and associational value of the site.

These four criteria were considered to be basic considerations for inclusion in an inventory of sites. Two further criteria which might influence inclusion, but which are primarily criteria for action, are:

5. The age or scarcity of a site or its value as an exemplar.
6. The extent to which a site is in danger of damage or destruction.

On the question of the organisation of a register or inventory of sites, David Yencken expressed his support for the idea of organising the recording of sites according to general themes of Australian history. Jane Lennon spoke on the thematic approach to site recording and investigation which is in use in the United States, and felt that if, as Isabel McBryde had suggested, the practical impossibility of total protection was going to force us into the selective approach, then the thematic technique was one good way of ensuring the protection of a good cross-section of sites. The responsibility of determining themes, however, became of vital importance, and discussion failed to produce any consensus on the orientation of such themes and whether they should be economic, technological, social, or something else in approach. There was agreement however that the question of themes should be further considered, and one conference recommendation to the Interim Committee of the National Estate was that the Committee should establish and fund a Project Co-ordination Committee to consider further the deliberations of the conference and in particular the question of themes. The full brief of this new committee is contained in part VII of this report.

One other major area of discussion was the question of the use of cut-off dates in defining what was 'historic'. The Maritime Archaeology Act in Western Australia does not apply to ships wrecked after 1900, and the legislation in South Australia employs 1865, a one hundred year period before the first act was drafted. In Victoria a rolling period of forty years is used by the National Trust. It was felt that cut-off dates of this nature might provide a useful marker before which blanket legislation could be applied, but the conference also felt that its brief included the protection of tomorrow's history today. World War II installations, the Sydney Opera House and the gas pipeline were all unique reflections of Australia's history which fell within the brief of the conference and were entitled to be considered in terms of the national heritage and any site inventory which might be developed.

## Part VI Education, Publication and Publicity

Throughout the conference reference was made to education in its various forms, and its implications in specific situations have been alluded to in other parts of this report. This section attempts to cover the principal areas of concern.

To begin, the participants expressed the need to educate themselves in the whole gamut of historic sites protection and development. Although many strands of expertise were represented, no one could own to a full understanding of the many areas which were explored during the meeting, and in this sense the conference provided a valuable medium of self-education for the participants.

One universally accepted premise was that historical accuracy is of paramount importance in all cases of restoration and reconstruction, and even site listing. Historic sites need to be authenticated. In many instances, even where this job is straightforward, it has not been done in the past. For example, although ample documentary evidence is available, the site of the Eureka Stockade is some distance from where (one suspects for commercial reasons) the site is presently purported to be. The most disturbing aspect of the mushrooming pioneer villages is that too often they bear little or no resemblance to past reality, and even where they do, their proprietors are too often willing to elaborate on history to 'sell' their product to the public, while at the same time using the catchcry of 'educational display' to seek public funding. It is immoral to say, as was quoted of one restoration architect, "The public doesn't care as long as it looks old". People with expertise in this field have the strongest moral obligation to undertake full and accurate research in their presentation of the past.

Several comments expressed doubt on drawing up a list of sites even with legislative protection, since this would draw attention to a new range of attractions for tour operators. Opinion was divided as to the efficacy of signs or plaques as a deterrent to vandalism in its various forms, but there appeared

to be some evidence to suggest that this was a hopeful line to pursue. But fundamentally the problem is educating the public to recognise the intrinsic worth of their national heritage. Jane Lennon argued that one found in national parks that schoolteachers felt they had a right to bring their classes to such places to collect, and rather than merely prevent them, some form of teaching reserve system needed to be developed. In the case of historic sites this could take the form of a display excavation or the cross-section of a building showing its construction.

As well as such informal education, it was felt that there were real grounds for trying to persuade education departments to adopt 'three dimensional' or material history into the curricula of both primary and secondary schools either as an adjunct to formal history or as a separate subject. Already at the tertiary level a course in historical archaeology is being taught at Sydney University as a non-departmental, but approved B.A. course, and a second year of the course is being contemplated. Similar courses have proven appeal in Adult Education.

Extending from this, there was consensus amongst the participants that training courses in all the fields of historic sites research - documentary research, archaeology, restoration architecture, and conservation among others - was of the highest priority, and that any Australian Heritage Commission should see the implementation of such courses as one of their immediate responsibilities. Such courses would ideally be organised within the universities, and the conference set up a small committee to look into the question.

There was also consensus that publication was a vital aspect of historic sites research and presentation at all levels. Australian Heritage Commission grants should require as a condition a detailed report on all stages of the work carried out under the grant and a portion of each grant should be set aside for this purpose. The Commission itself might ideally establish a publication department to ensure the dissemination of this



knowledge. As well, historic sites on display should provide guide books and catalogues, not only at the lowest common denominator level of throwaway pamphlets, but also at more detailed and attractive levels. It was considered that the British Department of Environment, and the British National Trust, and other similar overseas bodies should be consulted on the nature, scope and implementation of their public education programmes.

Part VII Recommendations of the Conference

A) General Recommendations

- 1.1 That this conference expresses its support for the Interim Committee of the National Estate's stated concern for the protection of historic sites and works.
- 1.2 That this conference recommends to the Interim Committee the desirability of a nation-wide inventory of historic sites and works.
- 1.3 That this conference, while aware of the existence of individuals and groups not represented who may offer further expertise, offers its assembled skills as a resource and information pool to the Interim Committee.

B) Specific Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Interim Committee of the National Estate appoint a further committee (here referred to as the Project Co-ordination Committee).
- 2.2 That the Project Co-ordination Committee should consist of about 10 people, appointed in such a way that the best geographical representation is achieved without prejudice to the best selection of available expertise.
- 2.3 That such a Project Co-ordination Committee be directed to:
  - 2.3.1 Report on the deliberations of the conference.
  - 2.3.2 Formulate draft themes or checklists for historic sites and works in Australia other than historic buildings (except where these form part of an historic site).
  - 2.3.3 Develop a uniform recording procedure.
  - 2.3.4 Organise the collection of lists of all known historic sites in Australia.
  - 2.3.5 Re-evaluate and redraft the draft themes (checklists).

- 2.3.6 Organise the identification of additional sites in the light of information collected.
  - 2.3.7 Distinguish significant areas towards which major work should be directed.
  - 2.3.8 Make any other recommendations to the Interim Committee as may seem relevant.
  - 2.3.9 Prepare a draft report.
  - 2.3.10 Organise a conference with similar representation to the present one to discuss the findings of the draft report and any other issues.
  - 2.3.11 Prepare a final report.
- 2.4 This conference recommends to the Interim Committee, that in view of disturbing evidence of the increasing interference with shipwreck sites in Australian waters, that the Interim Committee should immediately recommend to the Ministers concerned that the Australian Government should legislate to protect maritime archaeology provided constitutional powers to do so exist. Such legislation might ideally mirror the Western Australian Maritime Archaeology Act.
  - 2.5 That following on from recommendation 2.4, this conference also recommends to the attention of the Interim Committee the urgency of the Australian Government introducing legislation to protect all historic sites and works in all the Territories of Australia.
  - 2.6 That this conference recommends that the Australian Government becomes a signatory to the charter of the International Council of Monuments and Sites.
  - 2.7 That the conference recommends that members of this conference seek to collate information on the deficiencies of existing state legislations to deal with the preservation of historic sites and works, including suggestions for model legislations where none now exist;

that this information be made available to the Interim Committee on the understanding that this would be collated in the light of the wider knowledge of the Interim Committee, and returned to the members of the conference for private action.

- 2.8 That following on from recommendation 2.7, that any protective legislation concerning historic sites and works also involve the establishment of firm controls concerning the use, development or study of these sites and works, and that there be implemented a system of permits for the investigation of archaeological deposits similar to those applying to Aboriginal sites in Australia.
- 2.9 That this conference recommends to the Interim Committee the need to fund a national convention of Australian Historical Societies, together with archaeological societies, field naturalist groups and other pertinent groups to co-ordinate the recording of historic sites and works in local areas; and that some members of this conference or other individuals with expertise in this field be asked to attend such a convention, so that the specific knowledge and zeal of such bodies can be channeled most productively; and further that directions for future action which might evolve from such a convention should be formalised in the production of a booklet or some equivalent.

## Conclusions

To judge from the reactions of the participants this conference proved highly stimulating and successful. For the first time in Australia a body of people concerned with the future of historic sites research, protection and presentation, but previously confined to one area of it, were able to meet, exchange views, and hopefully set in motion a new phase of development in this field.

As a result of this meeting a short report was made to a meeting of the Interim Committee of the National Estate, who adopted *in toto* the recommendations concerning the formation of a Project Co-ordination Committee. The Interim Committee of the National Estate appointed to the new committee the following people: Mr D. Hutchison, Mr R. Ellis, Ms Jane Lennon, Mr F. Strahan, Dr M. Lewis, Miss Judy Birmingham, Ms Anne Bickford, Mr R. Stringer, Professor D.J. Mulvaney, Dr R. Jones and Dr J. Allen. Funding for the committee's work was approved in late January 1975, and the committee has met once, in Melbourne in early March, at which meeting Professor Michael Hugo-Brunt and Mr David Saunders were co-opted onto the committee.

Also as a result of the success of this conference, a similar conference on the conservation of building materials is in the planning stages, and is expected to take place in Hobart in April this year.

Jim Allen  
On behalf of the Project  
Co-ordination Committee  
on Historical Sites