EDITORIAL

Most people in a community regularly come into contact with the public spaces of their city, either on a weekend walk through a public garden; taking a short cut to an appointment; or to snatch a few minutes during a busy day in which to eat a sandwich whilst enjoying the fresh air and, if fortunate, some sun.

However these public spaces are generally taken for granted. Frequently little is known about the history of their formation: the political battles and the community participation; the original plans which were sometimes subsequently altered; the different and various ways the community has used it over time; and the designers, architects or gardeners who helped in making the public space as it exists today. Yet public spaces are able to provide valuable information about a community - its changing values and aspirations and, perhaps most importantly, they are able to demonstrate the attitudes, interests and concerns shared by the community over time.

This edition of Historic Environment is devoted to public spaces. It comprises contributions from different professional disciplines, and the authors focus on public spaces in Australia, in different ways. Graeme Davison considers Melbourne’s continuing search for a City Square - the political, economic and social factors operating which have prevented the city, for over one hundred and forty years, from developing a permanent square; Richard Aitken looks at the genesis and development of public gardens in Australia, and discusses their conservation and future management; Ashley Russell traces the development of Adelaide’s squares, and examines their importance and relevance to South Australians today; Andrew Brown-May considers a less tangible facet of public space, the associated sounds which, whilst constantly changing and almost impossible to preserve or conserve, are able to inform debate over control of public spaces; and, finally, George Seddon discusses the political exigencies operating which resulted in the alterations and changes to Freemantle’s public open spaces.

Your Editorial Committee has plans for many more interesting and challenging issues for 1995 and beyond, including a repeat of the successful 1993 edition of student papers. However, this is your Historic Environment - you too should have a say in its future direction and development. The Editorial Committee welcomes your suggestions and contributions; it also welcomes your comments.

Mary Sheehan