Editorial:
Current research in heritage and conservation studies from Australia and New Zealand

Tracy Ireland, Amy Clarke and Rebecca Hawcroft
This issue of *Historic Environment* emerged in response to a general call for papers (CFP) disseminated early in 2019 as one of our first duties as the incoming editorial team. A number of the abstracts selected from this CFP feature in this issue, while a second group will be published in subsequent volumes. This issue features five papers dealing with diverse, but strongly related, aspects of what we can collectively call the problem of ‘the social value of heritage’. The sixth and final paper, by Natica Schmeder, is a more technical study of conservation issues associated with architectural terracotta, and we are very pleased to publish this materials-focused research in response to requests from Australia ICOMOS members for more studies in this vein.

The fact that so many of the selected abstracts arising from the open call for papers dealt with aspects of social value was serendipitous, but also clearly demonstrates that social value is currently a significant focus for research by academics, research students and heritage practitioners, all of whom are represented in this volume. It is also pleasing to note the number of emerging and early career researchers represented here, demonstrating that the future of heritage studies research in Australia and New Zealand is looking both vibrant and distinctive.

The paper by James Lesh is an important, historically detailed analysis of how concepts of social value have operated and changed in Australian heritage practice and doctrine since the 1960s. Using examples from urban heritage conservation debates in Melbourne, and closely exploring both archives and interview data, Lesh provides an interpretation of how and why social value was included in the first iteration of the Burra Charter and how it has since been both used and ignored in a range of contexts. His suggestion of the perhaps tacit differences in understandings of values between archaeologists, historians and architects, provides an interesting historical dimension, and gives depth to current moves to reinvigorate the analysis of social value and the methods used to undertake this task.

Vanessa Whittington and Helen Waller explore a fascinating case study of working class heritage in Sydney: a place where a police siege occurred against an anti-eviction demonstration during the Great Depression. They explore the politics of how such places are remembered through the formal heritage system which tends to default towards an overemphasis on the aesthetic qualities of 19th and early 20th century inner city architecture, at the expense of the more complex, class riven histories that they also embody. Once again this case study invokes contested understandings of social and historical values and of how the meaning of important watershed events might be ignored, or embedded in place by a range of social actions and performances.

In a similar vein Alexandra Dellios extends her work on Australia’s post-war migrant heritage to questions of how the Benalla Migrant Camp is valued by former residents and their families and descendants. Of particular interest is Dellios’ argument that heritage management plans should bridge formalistic definitions and categorisations of built heritage, archives and oral history in order to be effective, meaningful and accepted by communities of interest. Dellios suggests
DETAIL DRAWING TYPICAL OF WUNDERLICH SERVICE

\[\frac{3}{4}\text{" pipes embedded in top of concrete. Piers & projecting up into T.C. Finials. Similar pipes are embedded in top of parapet projecting up into T.C. creating.}\]

No 6 Gauge Wire Ties spaced at approx. 6 centres along all T.C. bed joints.

\[5\times 8\text{" Ties embedded in concrete & projecting to support T.C. Shaft.}\]

No 6 Gauge Wire Ties spaced conveniently around Piers at every T.C. bed joint.

\[\text{Term Cotta part in section, part removed from concrete to show application of shelf Angle, Hangers, Pins, Wire Ties etc.}\]

SECTION AA

ELEVATION

WUNDERLICH TERRA COTTA
CONSTRUCTION DETAILS - PLATE 3

SCALE
\[\frac{\frac{3}{4}}{\text{"}} = 1 - 0\]

WUNDERLICH LIMITED, MANUFACTURERS

Wunderlich Ltd, 'Wunderlich Terra Cotta and Faience. Bulletin T.C. 8', 1938, page 17,
(Collection of Deakin University Library)
that the fact that so many women at Benalla were stigmatised with the label of ‘unsupported’ or single mothers, had meant that family members themselves did not advocate for heritage recognition of the camp until their memories and values were validated by others. This directly links to the political marginalisation of the historic experiences of the working class as described by Whittington and Waller in their paper, and also shows how these place-communities thus challenge established systems and repertoires of heritage management, highlighting the need to break down institutional barriers between tangible and intangible heritage, places, archives and collections.

Charlotte Feakins’ fascinating exploration of the Northern Territory’s buffalo hide industry also highlights how complex histories of settler colonialism evade the neat categorisations that heritage systems like to impose. Aboriginal women and men were integral to this industry, developing new cultural affiliations with this introduced species which transformed both culture and country. While white buffalo hunters were romanticised and feted for their intrepid adventures in the exotic north in the late 19th century, Feakins suggests that this entangled colonial history is currently largely ignored and not formally represented in the landscape of Kakadu National Park where her archaeological field work took place.

Finally, Carolyn Hill’s paper is also centrally concerned with social value and makes explicit links to what these values mean for traditional notions of conservation when applied to the coral stone churches of the Cook Islands. She suggests that while these places have clearly been changed, modified and transformed over time they are perceived by local people as essentially ‘unchanged’, and as the persistent and living work of their ancestors. Interestingly, Hill employs a cultural landscape approach to these buildings, as a way in which to better conceptualise the entwined reality of permanent heritage and dynamic social uses as combining to encompass a lifescape, as she calls it, that challenges dichotomous characterisations of heritage authenticity.

As a group, these papers highlight some of the key issues faced by the heritage sector in Australia and beyond, a sector experiencing a sense of rapid change and disruption. Tensions include change around:

- the sector’s relationship with government and its role in providing leadership for heritage conservation and management;
- the relationship between practice and theory, between the language of applied conservation versus theories of heritage making and the emergence of critical heritage studies;
- the roles of experts and non-experts and how this impacts research on social value.

These challenges are not unique to the heritage sector but mirror broader social tensions, including around the way in which culture participation and the humanities are valued. These papers don’t deal with these questions explicitly, but taken together they reflect something of the diversity of communities, approaches and issues encountered in Australia and its region.

We look forward to pursuing these and other important debates over our term as Editors and to ensuring that Historic Environment is a key source for excellent research that explores all aspects of heritage as a diverse cultural field.