Editorial

Australians are great celebrators, so it is appropriate that at this festive time of the year Historic Environment should pick up the theme of commemorations, memorials and monuments on which to base an issue. We haven't included any articles about the Melbourne Cup or Christmas but we have included articles on war memorials and the celebration of war (hopefully the end of it), Royal tours and gala street celebrations in Sydney and of course the monuments built for Victoria's centenary in 1934 (albeit in sugar).

Not only are Australians great celebrators, but they also suffer from extreme paranoia about their maturity as a nation. This can at least partly explain the desire to celebrate and commemorate. The country is profusely sprinkled with war memorials, representing a national baptism (just how many times do we need to be baptised). We celebrate Royal visits and jubilees with a fervour that befits a presumably adult nation recognising its mature and respected parentage. Last but not least we have an unsurpassed capacity to celebrate major (and even minor) birthdays. For example the sesqui-centenary is an Australian invention worthy of taking its place alongside the stump-jump plough and the sonic clothes washer. The world's first occurred in 1938 - fifty long years after Sydney's centennial celebrations of 1888, but just after the other states had just celebrated their own centenaries. NSW couldn't be without its own bash at this time, and anyway every Australian has a right to celebrate a national birthday in his or her lifetime (even if its only a 'half birthday').

The variety of memorials, monuments and celebrations available for us to describe was immense. Perhaps if readers can produce the material we could run a celebratory issue of Historic Environment annually.