This special double issue of *Historic Environment* contains the main papers presented at the Built in Wood Conference, the first Australian conference on the conservation of timber structures.

The conference was staged by Australia ICOMOS in Brisbane in April 1987 and was followed by a three-day tour to Gympie, Maryborough, and other parts.

The conference was arranged in four half-day sessions, each with a long keynote address to introduce a topic, followed by shorter presentations to develop or illustrate aspects of the theme.

Philip Venning, Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, was a special guest speaker. His Friday evening public lecture, 'The Importance of the Real' was the curtain-raiser.

The conference proper began on Saturday morning with a session on 'The Queensland House,' to orient delegates and introduce the local flavour. Don Watson was the keynote speaker, followed by Rod Fisher with a social historian's view, Peter Bell on the North Queensland timber house and Robert Riddel on the architect R.S. Dods. Lunch on a Brisbane ferry, and a short tour of some wooden houses followed.

The afternoon session looked at 'The Broader Scene,' beginning with a keynote address from Miles Lewis. Colin O'Connor then spoke about the systematic assessment of the large but diminishing stock of timber bridges in Australia. Kevin Carmody introduced a human dimension to matters of conservation, and Peter Freeman and Pru Sanderson wrapped up the session with talks on homesteads and woolsheds, and bibliographic resources.

The whole of Sunday was given over to talk of 'Science and Technology.' In the morning Philip Venning spoke on 'Issues in Timber Decay and Repair, the SPAB Experience.' Lothar Brasse followed on German buildings in South Australia, then Martin Davies on investigations, Lori Anglin on conservation work, and Alison Blake on assessment and listing.

Liam Leightley was the afternoon keynote speaker, with a summary of the present state of the 'Science of Timber Deterioration and Preservation.' The state of conservation practice was illustrated by Ian MacLeod with case studies of the preservation of shipwreck timbers, by Andrew Thorn, who spoke of 'Consolidation of Large Wooden Objects,' Marion Ravenscroft on aboriginal carved trees, and a duet by Estelle Lazer and Angela McGowan on the conservation of Mawson's Huts in Antarctica.

This issue of *Historic Environment* includes the full text of three of the keynote papers from the conference, along with selections, abstracts or summaries of the other papers. The bounds of space in the journal would not allow the entire proceedings to be reproduced.

The conference and tour were organised on behalf of Australia ICOMOS by Richard Allom, Lesley Beames, Janet Elliott, Fiona Gardiner, Peter Marquis-Kyle, Jinx Miles, Stephen Murray, Mark Whitmore and David Wixted. The task of organisation was helped by financial support from the Australian Heritage Commission, the Australian Commission for UNESCO, and the British Council.

It is hoped that the conference, and the publication of these papers, mark the beginning of a new interest in a subject too long ignored. There was hearty support at the Built in Wood Conference for the idea of another Australia ICOMOS conference on the same subject in a couple of years, with an Asian-Pacific perspective and participation.