Other topics and speakers at the Built in Wood Conference

The Importance of the Real

Philip Venning's opening address of the conference was presented as the National Trust of Australia (Queensland) annual Sir Raphael Cilento Oration for 1987. It is anticipated that the text of the lecture will be published in the Trust's journal.

The Experiential Dimension: A Social Historian's View of the Queensland House

Rod Fisher's paper is to be published in a forthcoming issue of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal.

An Historical Perspective of Timber Structures on the Darling Downs

Kevin Carmody gave an informal presentation of thoughts and reminiscences drawn from his current doctoral research into European perceptions of land and landscape during the early occupation of the Darling Downs, his own experience of living in his family's antbed-floored house of cypress pine and corrugated iron, and his work as a builder of timber sheds and yards. There is no written text.

Texts on Timber

Prudence Sanderson, a conservation architect, provided a detailed bibliography of useful texts for those working with pre-World War Two timber structures. Subjects included: the availability and relative prices of timbers at different dates; the physical properties of different timbers in terms of their construction capabilities; the identification of timber species for structural purposes, internal and external claddings and finishings, detailed joinery work, and, to a lesser extent, for cabinet work.

Identifying Important Timber Buildings:
A Victorian perspective

Alison Blake, a lecturer at Footscray Institute of Technology and formerly Assistant Administrator (Conservation) of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), discussed the prevailing image of timber buildings as 'second rate,' and the fact that timber structures are under-represented on the National Trust and Historic Buildings Registers, and in planning schemes with conservation provisions. She provided an outline of the pattern of timber building in Victoria and discussed why timber buildings are less appreciated for their conservation value, largely ignored and progressively destroyed, concluding that current conservation practice dealt poorly with 'the commonplace but significant.'

Science of Timber Deterioration and Preservation

Liam Leighty gave a general introductory explanation of the structure of timber, and of the various modes of deterioration and degradation from which it suffers. He described the range of insect and fungal afflictions of timber structures in Australia, and the mechanical and chemical procedures adopted to protect, treat and stabilise the material. There is no written text.

Conservation of Waterlogged Timber

Ian D. MacLeod, of the Department of Material Conservation and Restoration, W.A. Maritime Museum, gave a detailed report on the conservation of ship's timbers and other fittings recovered from the wreck of the Dutch East Indiaman, Batavia, which sank off the Western Australian coast in 1629. The problems of on-site recording and documentation, as well as transportation from a remote site to laboratories, were shown to be critical to the ultimate fate of the materials. Ian MacLeod outlined their treatment and described the plant needed to stabilise the conserved...
material and maintain a suitable display environment.

The Consolidation of Large Wooden Objects

Andrew Thorn, a conservator specialising in the conservation of painted wood, showed that methods suitable for the consolidation of small wooden objects were not always appropriate for load-bearing timbers or massive sculptures weighing several tonnes. Conservators must be able to assess the structural requirements of the wood and establish to what extent the chosen method will achieve that objective. To demonstrate methodology in choosing a suitable consolidant, Andrew Thorn described the investigation of the Nelson figurehead, a 3.5 metre sculpture weighing 5 tonnes, dating back to 1814, and now at HMAS Cerberus in Victoria. He described removal of paint and lead sheeting, and the reasons for choosing a low viscosity epoxy as a resin.

The Conservation of Aboriginal Carved Trees

In 1985 Marion Ravenscroft began a project for conservation of Aboriginal carved trees in NSW. These living totems of eastern Australia were first documented in 1918, when there were 300 known sites, some containing up to 80 carved trees. In 1945, 132 sites were located, with between 700 and 1000 trees. The expansion of agriculture, pastoral operations, bushfires and natural decay have reduced the number and only 74 carved trees can be found at their original site. Marion Ravenscroft examined the problems of termite infestation and wood-boring insects, vandalism, phosphates in the soil, and neglect. She presented an assessment of the remaining trees and recommendations for their conservation.

The Conservation of Mawson’s Huts, Antarctica

Estelle Lazar and Angela McGowan, historical architects based in Sydney and Hobart respectively, presented an illustrated account of their archaeological work during the summer of 1984/85 in two ‘Project Blizzard’ expeditions to Sir Douglas Mawson’s 1912 huts at Cape Deveson, Commonwealth Bay, Antarctica. There is no written text.