The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of: Housing Provision in Australia 1945 - 1960


In 1946, in one of Melbourne’s developing ‘middle ring’ suburbs, an average-sized house was totally destroyed by fire. The tragedy was not so much the fire - houses are unfortunately regularly destroyed by fire - but the fact that eleven people were left homeless. That three families, with four children between them, and another single person, had been living together in one house was not extraordinary at the time. Indeed, until the fire, they had been among the more fortunate for they had shelter.

A housing crisis existed in Australia after the Second World War, estimated to be in the region of about 300,000 dwellings. It was to continue for a number of decades, exacerbated by the unusually high marriage and birth rates, as well as an increase in population through immigration. Australia emerged from this period as the most urbanised nation in the world, with nearly three quarters of the population living in houses they were either purchasing or owned outright.

In his recently published book The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of, Alastair Greig examines housing provision in Australia in the fifteen years following the war. In doing so he explores a number of aspects including the form housing assumed and the choices people made while constrained by limitations such as material shortages.

Material shortages were not the only problem, the book reveals. Other problems existed including a shortage of skilled and unskilled labour. A measure of the desperation for shelter experienced after the war can be indicated by the number forced to build their own houses. Greig writes that such was the impact of these owner-builders that David Williamson, in his youth, was so affected by the spectacle of Australian males building their houses at the weekends he thought a right of passage was publicly being enacted - one he would have to undertake someday to prove his manhood: ‘I saw all these guys building their houses. ... I was hopeless at carpentry and I had nightmares that when I reached 21 I’d have to go out ... and build my own home.’

Other aspects Greig explores in his book are the changes in the building industry and the emergence of project builders. He investigates the concept of ‘modernism’, discussing it in reference to architecture, advertising and design, and in connection with a range of theories associated with social and technological change. The role played by Robin Boyd in promoting ‘modernism’, and condemning its antithesis ‘featurnism’, is explored, as is also the changing influence of the Australian House and Garden in the development of ‘modernism’.

Greig points out that the ‘modern’ house emerged at a time of material shortage and governments’ attempts to slice the fiscal cake as thinly and equitably as possible. During the 1950s, the ‘modern’ house was, he suggests, as much a reflection of necessity as a celebration of the functional. The 1950s cream brick veneer house continues to be criticised for its mediocrity, and allowance is still not made for the post war desperation for affordable shelter. The innovations and technological advances made during this period have also not been fully appreciated.

Greig places these and other factors within a national framework and analyses the circumstances which contributed to housing provision in Australia between 1945 and 1961. His book is a valuable contribution to the study of urban growth in Australia, placing it within an industrial, political, economic and social context. It should be read by those involved in conserving our urban environment; those curious about the origins of modernism and the changes in house construction; as well as those interested in urban studies, social history and Australian history.

Mary Sheehan is the Senior Historian at Heritage Victoria. She is currently undertaking a Ph D examining the role of builders in Melbourne’s housing development between 1945 and 1973.
A Shrub in the Landscape of Fame


A Shrub in the Landscape of Fame traces the life and work of Thomas Shepherd (1779-1835), Australia’s first landscape gardener, nurseryman and author. The book includes ten well researched chapters on the history of Shepherd and reproduces as appendices his 1831 lectures ‘On the Cultivation of the Vines’ [fruit growing], and the first lecture on ‘Landscape Gardening in Australia’ given in 1835 just before his death and published shortly afterwards. According to Professor Richard Clough in his introduction, this is five years before the first North American book on landscape design by Andrew Jackson Downing, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adopted to North America. It was the first to be published outside Britain, and more than a century before another book was published in Australia on this subject.

Thomas Shepherd was born in 1779 at Kemback, north of Edinburgh. Shepherd’s father worked as principal gardener on the estate of the Earl of Crawford, and from a young age learnt gardening practices from his father. This was at the time that ‘Capability’ Brown, regarded as the founder of the English Landscape movement, had been practising. Shepherd recalls that the landscape gardener, Thomas White, who adopted Brown’s picturesque style and undertook commissions in Scotland and the north of England, first inspired him: ‘It was his plans seen by me in my youth which first gave me a taste for Landscape Gardening.’ After leaving school Shepherd commenced studying horticulture and landscape gardening from individual masters - Brown, Repton and White - and from books.

In 1796, at the age of seventeen, Shepherd went to his first gardening position near his home in Fifeshire, and was eventually responsible for supervising several of White’s jobs. For 20 years he was a nurseryman at Hackney near London, but in 1820 he moved to Worthing in Sussex with his ailing wife who died shortly afterwards. He remarried, started a second family, and in late 1825 sailed to Stewart Island, New Zealand to establish a Flax industry. Shepherd reported that conditions for a flax industry were not viable, and fearing a Maori uprising, sailed to New South Wales in 1826.

Following his arrival in New South Wales, Governor Darling offered him two grants: one in the country for agriculture and one near Sydney for the purpose of establishing a nursery and fruit garden. Shepherd named this nursery, which is now located near Sydney University, Darling Nursery after the Governor. He received support and plants from William Macarthur and Alexander McLeay, but had a difficult time getting his nursery established as buyers were few. As a final resort and in a attempt to educate the public, Shepherd agreed to give a series of public lectures on Horticulture and Landscape gardening.

In 1831 Shepherd gave lectures on vine, vegetable and fruit growing which were published in 1835 as Lectures on Horticulture of New South Wales. In 1835, he wrote a series of lectures on ‘Landscape Gardening in Australia’. Shepherd died on 30 August 1835, aged 56 years, having delivered only one of these lectures. They were published posthumously by his friend, William McGarvie, in 1856.

Making direct reference to ‘Capability’ Brown and Humphry Repton, Shepherd outlined the techniques of landscape design and advised on their adaptation to the Australian environment. Shepherd’s principles for laying out gardens show many similarities with the ideas of Repton. However his ideas were out of date, and new theories and the ‘gardenesque’ style were being presented by J C Loudon. Loudon’s publications on horticulture, gardening and domestic architecture including Suburban Garden and Villa Companion (1838) were available, and were more relevant to the urban landscapes that were developing, rather than Shepherd’s large landscape parks.

The direct influence of Thomas Shepherd and his book on gardens in New South Wales and Australia is uncertain. No actual landscaping can be attributed to him, but several of his suggestions can be traced to contemporary gardens, and Victor Crittenden and Howard Tanner in The Great Gardens of Australia suggest the gardens of Lyndhurst, Glebe, and a few other gardens, as those whose owners had connections with Shepherd.

In Tasmania, Panshanger, Connriville and Quorn Hill were developed with large parklands imitating the eighteenth century English parkland. The only gardens that remotely reflect this style in Victoria are Mount Noorat, Menningort, Glenara and Murndal. However the unique English parklands at Murndal, first settled in 1835 were not developed until the 1860s, and interestingly Samuel Pratt Winter along with Thomas Shepherd were...
both out of step with contemporary landscape design. Shepherd’s lectures provided advice on the correct siting of a house ‘... choose a spot near its centre, in a wide valley between two hills ... near the centre of the valley where good water may be found ... [and] to provide an uninterrupted view of the park and pleasure grounds’. The house at Murdai is sited almost exactly according to these specifications, as is Glenara, and the remarkable Warrock homestead, which is perhaps the finest example of using the picturesque remnant plantings of giant River Red Gums - also advocated by Shepherd, when he wrote ‘... in place of cutting down our splendid forests right forward without distinction, we have only to thin out, and tastefully arrange and dispose them, to produce the most pleasing effects.’ Shepherd was possibly also Australia’s first environmentalist!

A minor criticism with the book is some repetition between the chapters. There is unfortunately an error in the book, including the end page giving Shepherd’s birth as 1776 and his death as 1836. The correct dates are 1779 and 1835. The book includes a very helpful section on ‘Notes on Sources’ for each chapter and an extensive bibliography and index.

This publication will be of interest to historians, landscape architects and horticulturists and will greatly contribute to an understanding of the history and development of horticulture and landscape gardening in Australia. It follows similar reprints by the English National Trust on early gardening books including Shirley Hibberd’s Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste, William Robinson’s The Wild Garden, and another publication, On the layout, planting and managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards, by J C Loudon. Hopefully more of these important works, including Australian publications can be reprinted.

John Hawker is the horticulturist for the Department of Planning and Development, Victoria, a position he has held for 5 years. From 1982 - 1990 he was Horticulturist and Project Officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, and for the Register of Significant Trees of Victoria. In 1989 John was awarded a Churchill Fellowship on the Conservation and Management of Botanic and Historic Gardens.

1836 Catalogue: Daniel Bunce


This is a reprint of Daniel Bunce’s 1836 plant catalogue from Denmark Hill Nursery in Hobart Tasmania, which was published only a year after he arrived in Hobart. In 1838 he published A Manual of Practical Gardening, Adapted to the Climate of Van Dieman’s Land, which became Australia’s third gardening book. Victor Crittenden provides background information on Bunce, who only spent four years in Tasmania, moving to St Kilda, Victoria, to establish a nursery. Later, he joined the explorer Leichhardt and eventually became Director of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. He also advised on the laying-out of the Colac and Camperdown Botanic Gardens.

This is possibly Australia’s earliest nursery catalogue, predating another known catalogue produced by James Dickson of Hobart in 1845. It lists about 200 plants and seeds, comprising of flowers, shrubs, vegetables, herbs, fruits and trees, including a number of Australian plants such as several species of Acacia, Bursaria, native box, but no Eucalyptus.

As with Dickson’s catalogue, the plants are listed in alphabetical order, and includes genera and common names: for example, “Bauhinia, three species; Ceanothus; Elm tree, two species; and Oak”. While the plant list is of historical interest, the list provides insufficient details for researchers to determine what plant species or cultivar were being grown.

This facsimile is a useful addition to other nursery catalogue publications such as Nineteenth Century Plant Nursery Catalogues of South-East Australia: A Bibliography by R Polya (1981) and the valuable, Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855-1990 by the Ornamental Plant Collections Association (1992) which also provides a list of current botanical names and nursery dates - of great assistance when selecting plants for historic gardens.

John Hawker (see above).

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The Australian Terrace House

Brian Turner, Angus and Robertson, Pymble N.S.W. 1995, pp 96, $19.95, soft cover.

Anyone with an interest in terrace houses will know that there are few published books on the topic and just a trickle of unpublished papers and theses. Best known of the books are Cruikshank and Wyld’s London, the Art of Georgian Building and Mutheusius’ very accessible The English Terraced House. The major (unpublished) Australian work appears to be Terrace Housing in New South Wales a report commissioned by the Australian Heritage Commission. Apart from this a scattering of useful information can be gathered from the various state heritage agencies and from university theses. There is one thesis currently in progress on this topic by an architecture student of the University of Melbourne.

Brian Turner, in his book The Australian Terrace House, mostly ignores existing research on the subject and chooses not to supply any original material of his own. This is unfortunate, as there is an obvious void in published Australian research on terrace housing and the production of any comprehensive text would, most likely, be eagerly received by the market. But Turner comprehensively squanders this opportunity, not only through lack of research but also through a lack of acute observation.

The book’s index suggests that there is a broad coverage of topics, but this is only an illusion. On opening at the appropriate page you find that your chosen subject receives only a one or two word mention, and in some cases the information is demonstratively wrong. One was the ‘observation’ that three storey terraces are uncommon in Melbourne. Through a small amount of research on my own part I was able to find an unpublished paper which identifies more than 40 three storey terraces.

In the case of Queensland, there are so few terrace houses that Turner could have individually identified and researched each, but this opportunity is bypassed in favour of generalisations about regional differences. One begins to form the impression that all of Turner’s research has been carried out in the local public library.

The illustrations constitute the one positive aspect of the book - paintings by Sali Herman and early photographs of inner city living based around terrace houses. But the text really supports these illustrations rather than the reverse and even so this is not necessarily a valuable arrangement. One illustration (Clarendon Terrace) has a caption which simply misses the point. This terrace group along with ‘Clarendon’ at Nile in Tasmania, are the only Giant Order residences in Australia but Turner proffers nothing more profound than ‘the three houses were designed to resemble a single Classical residence’.

The obvious lack of original survey or construction drawings could have been overcome by a visit to one of the State archives or municipal councils. Nineteenth century public works organisations such as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works spent large amounts of time surveying and mapping in detail every building in Melbourne prior to the turn of the century. This invaluable reference source has long been used by researchers to understand building materials, density of dwellings, sanitation, and garden layouts. The omission of this type of document as a research base is just plain laziness.

Two major topics omitted from the book are gardens associated with terraces and the contemporary resurgence of terrace house construction which in some localities is epidemic and (almost) pure nineteenth century reproduction.

On the whole the book is a poor effort, given the existing opportunities for tying together unpublished research and undertaking further study using the mass of primary source material available at municipal councils, State Libraries and archives. Its publication is doubly unfortunate as it is likely to restrict the prospects for any upcoming well researched publication in the same field.

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Salute the Brave: A Pictorial Record of Queensland War Memorials

Shirley and Trevor McIvor, University of Southern Queensland Press, Toowoomba, 1994, pp 340, $54.95 soft cover.

War Memorials of Victoria: A Pictorial Record Researched

Harold Bradley, Bob Christey, Damien Cook and Colwin Williams, Returned Services League, Victorian Branch, Melbourne, 1994, pp 240, $39.95, hard cover.

Inventories are essential tools for documenting culture but rarely can they be undertaken on a state-wide basis without substantial funding. Salute to the Brave: A Pictorial Record of Queensland War Memorials and War Memorials of Victoria: A Pictorial Record Researched present two cases where state-wide inventories of war memorials have been completed by different methods and on a shoestring.

In the case of the Queensland inventory, Salute to the Brave, the authors saw it as their personal challenge to document the state’s memorials after having funding applications rejected by Canberra. They give an interesting
account of their personal dedication to this project in the introduction. At first glance this book appears to be a glossy coffee table volume but closer inspection reveals the quirky editorial nature of the production. This does not devalue their effort or the content, which will surely see this book being sought-after well into next century by historians, genealogists, restoration architects and shire councils.

The book’s value is not just its completeness as an inventory but the quality of the amateur photographs and the useful text. For some of the text the authors took advantage of a study of Queensland Memorials produced for the Australian Heritage Commission by historian Judith McKay. The McIvors have however worked hard to get the photographs ‘just right’ and this necessitated numerous site revisits to retake photographs which were then processed at the local K-Mart.

Not only are Memorials documented and categorised, but so too are Rolls of Honour, War Trophies, Digger Memorials, Memorial Gates, Parks, Halls, Group Tributes, Gallipoli Pines and more. The McIvors have confessed they were not able to carry out the Honour Roll inventory in depth as many Memorial and Shire Halls were inaccessible during their weekend visits. This is a little unfortunate but ultimately beyond control.

One of the immediate impressions you gain from the inventory is the low level of Commonwealth or State involvement in the erection of memorials. The types and sizes built (and some are quite bizarre) give a clue to the spontaneous sense of loss and comradeship felt in country towns after each war. At this point the book shows that it is really an inventory by having no real analysis of the monuments documented. This aspect is being fulfilled by academics such as Professor Ken Inglis.

Overall, however, this inventory is an outstanding effort, given the limited finances and the background of the authors. It is a document that should be obtained by museums, libraries, and historical societies. It is also likely that the inventory will appear on CD ROM in the near future.

War Memorials of Victoria appeared in print at almost the same time as Salute the Brave and was, perhaps because of geographical factors, a simpler exercise. The logistics of gathering photographs from volunteer sources appears from the Acknowledgments section to have been a more difficult task.

In contrast to the Queensland production, the Victorian version appears to lack control over the illustrations and does not really categorise the inventory into Memorials, Memorial Halls, Gates, Parks and so on. The graphics editing is just as quirky as the Queensland version but here the great disappointment is really the black and white photographs which are sometimes unreadable. Many need to be retaken in better light or from a different angle. The lack of any text is equally disappointing.

I gained the impression from the inventory that many of Victoria’s memorials are obelisks or a derivative, and a high percentage of the memorials appear to have been artistically conceived and reasonably well funded from a grieving but generous public. Ballarat’s Arch of Victory with the enormously long Avenue of Honour and Melbourne’s Shrine are illustrative examples. While it is not fervent with information War Memorials of Victoria is still a useful document for exploring the state’s history and, like its Queensland counterpart, should be obtained by museums, libraries, and historical societies.

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Documenting a Nation: Australian Archives - The First Fifty Years

Hilary Golder, Australian Archives in association with AGPS Press, Canberra, 1994, pp 82, $22.95, soft cover.

In recent years Australian Archives has reoriented its policies and strategies, taking on a national leadership role in the Australian archival community. It has addressed the challenges of our rapidly changing technological environment, and sustained its role in promoting good public administration and accountability in government through accountable record keeping, while committing itself to improving the accessibility of the archival resources of Australia. For the first time in its history it is now emphasising public programming and outreach. The publication of Documenting a Nation is in part a reflection of this reorientation.

Richly illustrated, attractively produced and designed, this commemorative booklet tells the story of the evolution of Australian Archives from the appointment of the first Commonwealth Archives Officer, Ian Maclean, in October 1944 to today. The publication has two stated aims: one is to show the diverse range of records held by Australian Archives and the role they play in ‘documenting a nation’, providing clues to ‘the conundrum of the Australian identity’, and bearing witness to Australian life and achievement in many fields. Another is to ‘condense its [the Archives] complex history into a readable narrative’. The booklet attempts to achieve these objectives by interweaving a rather dry chronological treatment of key events in the administrative history of Australian Archives (‘Prehistory’ 1901-1942, ‘A Fledgling Archives System’ 1942-1961, ‘Plugging Away’ 1961-1974, ‘Challenge and Consolidation’ 1974-1994) with reproductions of documents from its holdings: for example the cable signalling the handover of the Queensland defence forces;
Banjo Patterson’s application for a commission in the AMF; a front elevation of the new GPO Perth; a Rationing Commission poster; photographs of a naturalisation ceremony, and of the moonrock samples presented to Prime Minister John Gorton by US Vice-President Spiro Agnew, and so on. It succeeds much better in its first aim than its second, although inevitably the selection of material tends to reflect the need to present that which is visually appealing rather than representative of the majority of documents held by Australian Archives.

In my view the publication does not deliver on the blurb’s promise of ‘a modern history of bureaucratic battles, Prime Ministerial interventions and conflict between some old-world thinking on history and records and some more enlightened views about just how this young country should preserve the government records of its life and times.’

I wonder if a thematic approach to the purposes and achievements of the Archives might not have served this aim better, and the final chapter, ‘Using the Archives’, seems to bear this out. I would also like to have seen some engagement with the archival challenges of our electronic and networked future. A sense of this is well captured in the title of the US National Archives and Records Administration’s 1994 Report, Preparing for a New Records Age. There are no references in Documenting a Nation to the exciting initiatives the Archives is taking in relation to electronic record keeping, initiatives that are vital to ensuring that the advent of the virtual office will not lead to national amnesia, or to its plans to use the Internet to deliver archival information services. Its national leadership role within the archival community in Australia and its contributions to the international scene do not rate a mention.

The booklet concludes with a curious selection of facts and figures that beg many questions about the meaningfulness of the statistics archival institutions painstakingly collect about their activities. Presumably the majority of the 474 shelf kilometres of records in custody belong in what Hilary Golder describes as the Archives ‘warehouse’, referring to its secondary storage operation, rather than its ‘treasurehouse’. Does the statistic of 52,258 record items issued to and returned by the public in 1993-94 indicate that the organisation’s reference programs are failing or succeeding in their mission? How useful is it to know that there are 571 Commonwealth Persons registered in Australian Archives’ computerised information system, RINSE? What does the fact that 51% of clients identify themselves as genealogists say about the use of archives?

Finally the publication provides listings of Australian Prime Ministers whose records are in custody, other Australian Archives publications and the addresses of Australian Archives locations around the country.

To sum up: the narrative makes a valiant effort to ‘condense’ the history of Australia’s national archives, but tends to lose the plot in the chronology. It is the visually appealing nature of this publication that carries the day, and the records it reproduces that most effectively encapsulate the role of Australian Archives in documenting the nation. The staff of Australian Archives have served the aims of the volume particularly well by their identification of documents for reproduction in the booklet. I particularly enjoyed the design concept of this publication with its integration of text and illustrations, and the way the archival documents selected for inclusion tell their own intriguing story.

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Crawley Campus: The Planning and Architecture of the University of Western Australia

R J Ferguson, University of Western Australia Press, 1993, pp 114, $39.95, soft cover.

Crawley Campus is a compilation of the ideas, people and designs which have been integral to the history of the university since its inauguration in 1912. A richly illustrated, well presented book, it traces the development of the campus until the present day. It reinforces the planning and building controls established in the original design concept that have contributed to the unique character and atmosphere of the University of Western Australia.

Beginning with the establishment of a university in central Perth, the author, R J (Gus) Ferguson, traces the relocation of structures to the Crawley site and the commencement of a building program. In order to explain the design objectives that still regulate campus development and which have assisted the integration of individual buildings on the site, Ferguson reviews the competition design proposals for both the original 1920s layout and the Hackett Memorial buildings. The author also documents the use of landscaping as a generative for human interaction and as an integral element for building design.

The development of planning schemes and the resulting building and space requirements forms the principle focus of Crawley Campus. This includes the controversial recommendations of Gordon Stephenson in the 1950s and the recent proposals by the author for diversification and consolidation.

The original buildings have been surrounded by a variety of architectural styles which are satisfactorily identified in the remainder of the book. A good selection of archival drawings is used to illustrate the diversity of these designs. As Ferguson explains:

*The architectural success of the campus has been achieved by various buildings, each individual architectural statements in their own right, being designed to be compatible with their neighbours - and particularly with the original group of buildings - through scale, colour and texture, without being constrained in terms of sculptural innovation or choice of materials.*

An important feature of the book is the biographical references to many West Australian academic and architectural figures who collaborated in the university projects, such as John Winthrop Hackett, Rodney Alsop and Marshall Clifton. The dominant role of the Public Works Department, particularly during the 1920s under the direction of W Hardwick, is also apparent in the progressive construction techniques implemented in the campus architecture.

It is disappointing that the author does not comment on the internal fabric and intimate spaces which have resulted from the planning criteria. The New Fortune Theatre in the Department of Arts is an excellent outdoor venue and a good example of clever campus organisation, but is missing from the text. The connection between the demand for campus services and the building agenda is also difficult to appreciate due to the confusing chronological organisation. Disappointing also is the minimal comparative analysis between buildings or with other universities, which could have been used to assess educational and social benefits of the planning.

Whilst Crawley Campus is not a comprehensive evaluation, it competently illustrates the essential elements of university planning systems and the changing social attitudes to education in Western Australia during the twentieth century. Essential to the theme is the message that contemporary architecture has a vital role in university planning, but also that it is important to maintain a close link between new ideas and primary concepts: ‘... most campus buildings are free from passing fashions and achieve individual merit by contributing to the success of the total campus.’

R J Ferguson has been the consultant architect for the University of Western Australia since 1985 and has considerable knowledge of the campus planning, landscaping and architecture. Crawley Campus is a substantial research initiative which is the result of investigation and documentation collected since his appointment. It is an important reference book which contributes to the information base of Western Australia’s development after the goldrush. It is also one which
formalises the knowledge and research of a respected and talented architect and in so doing forms a valuable summary of the work in which he has been involved.

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Childe and Australia: Archaeology, Politics and Ideas.

Peter Gathercole, T H Irving and Gregory Melleuish (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1995, pp 245, $16.95, soft cover.

The title of this book is rather misleading as some of the papers it contains have only the remotest connection with Gordon Childe, others have nothing to do with Australia, and half have nothing to do with archaeology. This is because the book consists of the collected papers given at a symposium, thus resulting in a very mixed bag of offerings.

The editors do, however, attempt to partly justify both their selection of papers and choice of title by claiming that the papers on Childe are intended to provide 'a context for the Australian end of Childe's intellectual development'. They also provide a picture of the remarkable vitality and diversity of Australian intellectual life during the first two decades of the twentieth century. While I suppose the first is true, I was not entirely convinced of the second proposition, but that is perhaps for others to debate in another place. The papers which discuss Childe, but not his archaeology, shed little light on his archaeological interests except to highlight his use of Marxist theory, a fact which is commonly known. What the book ultimately leaves unanswered is why Childe, an Australian archaeologist, devoted his life to European prehistory.

There are a couple of biographically slanted offerings: one which documents Childe's sojourn in Queensland in 1918-1919, including a stint as a master at Maryborough Boys Grammar school; another is entitled 'Vere Gordon Childe and the Cold War', and states that in life '... he felt he had two options: emigrate to the United States, ... or commit suicide'. Rather oddly, considering the title of the book, no comment is offered as to why a further option may not have been a return to Australia. According to Mulvaney, 'Gordon Childe has emerged from this book with his reputation enhanced and his personality better understood'. The first may be true, but the second certainly doesn't apply to this reader: Childe's personality remains resolutely opaque. Why was Childe in a state of constant despair and obsessed with suicide? There were many left wing intellectuals whose lives, unlike Childe's, were totally ruined in the McCarthy era, but who don't seem to have been plunged into such gloom and doom. And the final act of despair can really hardly have been brought about by the Great Australian Materialism.

The most interesting papers in the book were those by Gathercole and Maddock, both anthropologists. The former provides a penetrating insight into the development of Childe's archaeological theory, showing how far he was from being a doctrinaire Marxist and the extent to which he laid the groundwork for a coherent archaeological epistemology. Maddock asks 'whether there were continuities in Childe's view of society underlying the diverse topics to which he addressed himself during his career'. He concludes that Childe was not a relativist but evaluated the societies he studied (p.113) and, while rejecting unilinearity, nonetheless 'saw mankind as having, in the long term, advanced in a linear fashion. Events and transformations could be made intelligible by showing where they stood in the story of progress'.

Only two papers by archaeologists discuss Childe's archaeology. Richards provides an interesting argument for the importance of Childe's only significant field work (in the Orkneys), usually treated by archaeologists as being of even less relevance to their concerns than How Labour Governs. The minuscule number of archaeologists who seriously think the quarrels of the post-processualists with the processualists pose some kind of threat to the study of archaeology might find Murray's paper of interest.

Mulvaney's afterword is problematic. Does he really believe the castigations of academics by Aboriginal
people, a long disadvantaged minority, are to be equated with a totalitarian peril comparable to that posed by Nazis in 1939? I am myself unaware of any Australian archaeologists being forced to turn their knowledge to unwilling propaganda account. Mulvaney seems to think that his recycled closing words have been somehow proven by the return of the Kow Swamp remains to Aboriginal people. One of the problems there seems to be that twenty years was apparently insufficient time to allow a full description of them to be published, but I'm not sure that proves anything about scientific liberty. I imagine the recent failure of an Australian archaeology department to observe relevant legislation, which led to research material being withdrawn from them, will be similarly construed. I do wonder what Childe would have made of all this. Given his political views, one imagines he might have seen the point of the Aboriginal view; but Childe the person remains much too indistinct to be sure.

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**Tianjin: Urban Heritage Conservation Strategy**


Preparation of the Tianjin Urban Conservation Strategy commenced in late 1991 with the undertaking of preliminary research by a team sponsored by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies (AIUS). Tianjin has a sister city relationship with the City of Melbourne and the study, whilst initially sponsored by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, was subsequently supported by the City, the Department of Planning and Housing, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the University of Melbourne and AIUS.

For a long time Tianjin has been the port city for Beijing. Between 1860 to Japanese occupation in the Second World War, the European presence there was strong. This presence manifested itself in the development of foreign concession areas. These areas (British, French, Italian, Austro-Hungarian, German, Japanese, Russian and American) now support a substantial heritage of European styled buildings. The study team obviously found this aspect of the city of great interest. A substantial part of the report is devoted to analysing some 180 buildings and grouping them into a multitude of styles and sub-styles ranging from French Gothic to Spanish Mission. The illustrations of these buildings attest that this stylistic analysis is highly credible and most Australian cities would be proud of the variety and quality of the architecture analysed. We are, however left wondering what the Chinese make of this peculiarly western and purely architectural way of looking at their heritage.

There follows a substantial section on identified conservation areas. Not surprisingly this looks very much like the sort of analysis included in local urban conservation studies. By its own admission the conservation plan outlined for each area is generalised due to a lack of information. Whilst for each area there has been an endeavour to describe it, establish a statement of significance and outline a conservation plan there is hardly sufficient analysis for the local authorities to use the study as an effective management tool.

The next section is titled ‘General Issues’. This is without doubt the weakest part of the report, wandering across a range of subjects as diverse as land use and traffic, to the role of high rise buildings in Tianjin, to tourism issues. Much of the material included comes across as highly simplified advice based on limited observation. The report would have been stronger without most of it. For example, what will the Chinese authorities make of recommendation seven on page 166: “Credit cards should be much more widely accepted. Currency Exchange should be more readily available at banks as well as hotels.” The author of this section may have been personally inconvenienced by these matters, but surely that doesn’t give him the right to dol out such advice in a report on the heritage of the city.

The sections on the Old City Conservation Area and the Jie Fang Bei Road Conservation Area show competent analysis and in the former deal with pressing redevelopment issues. The latter, aside from making recommendations in the form of a conservation plan (primarily dealing with traffic and building conservation issues) also undertakes some detailed design work for three case study locations. The drawings included in this section are good and easy to relate to. Whether the suggestions for landscaping and the installation of street furniture and sculpture will be as easy to relate to remains to be seen.

It is probably unfair to review this report as a stand alone product of the project. It is but the public face of an exercise that continued for some years, involved a substantial presence by the Australian team in Tianjin as well as a visit to Melbourne by key local operatives exposing them to our own conservation experience and results. These components of the project have probably had far more impact than any written report. It is, however, the report that we are left to review, and aside from its individual strengths and weaknesses it does leave the reader with a general feeling of unease. There is a tremendous sense of a group of Australians applying their own culturally specific values, values which are comprehensible in our own society, to the substantial planning problems of a place with a quite different cultural base.
These planning exercises offer the temptation to deliver a form of cultural imperialism to the client country or city. With Australians becoming very active in heritage conservation work throughout Asia we must be careful to export our expertise and not just a Eurocentric view of the world. The challenge is to have our clients avoid the mistakes we may see them heading for and as a consequence have the clients themselves deliver a good conservation result. Results which are supported by their own cultural commitment.

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