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## Heritage & Community Conference - 27-28 February 2001 Forum 2: What guides are there for the work we do?

Convenor: Meredith Walker

Posts: 73

Registered: Jan 2000

posted 26 February 2001 06:54 PM



Meredith is a Sydney-based heritage consultant who has actively encouraged community involvement in all aspects of heritage management and regularly works as a volunteer/activist in heritage, museums and local matters. Meredith has written and spoken about involving people: she prepared a workshop model for involving people in heritage decisions in 1992, 'What's important about our town?' and Protecting the Social Value of Public Places: An illustrated guide, in 1998. Meredith is the co-author (with Peter Marquis-Kyle) of The Illustrated Burra Charter: Making good decisions about the care of important places, published by

Australia ICOMOS.

### Issues for discussion (discussion starter)

Guides for our work are derived from four interrelated sources:

The philosophy of conservation Heritage conservation is a cultural practice undertaken for/with the community's benefit

Guidelines for practice – The Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS; The Australian Natural Heritage Charter, Protecting Heritage Places – a guide for communities; What is Social Value, etc.

Community participation - concepts and models;

Ethics - professional, personal and organisational. Good will, respect and good manners are also useful – (as Chris Johnston says) 'look, ask and listen'.

Take this opportunity to say what guides your practice in relation to involving people, and to comment on current philosophy, guidelines and practice. Your experience and ideas will be useful to others. Don't hesitate to say what you think or to challenge others. Give your views on the discussion points, or raise other issues.

You may want to think about these issues:

1. While heritage systems allow for community involvement, people's time and resources are more limited now than when the systems were devised. Now that most conservation plans, heritage impact statements, planning controls etc. are prepared/paid for by the

owner/developer; should people rely upon the goodwill/ethics of professionals to ensure that their interests are understood and wholeheartedly considered?

2. When involving people with heritage places, are the community views (views of associated people) an adjunct to the practitioner's views or the key determinant of policy and action?

3. When involving people in the management of heritage places it is likely that they will hold views other than your own. Is working with the community just about being a 'people person'? Should community involvement be undertaken by a specialist practitioner (providing advice to the principal practitioner)?

4. People, including heritage practitioners, are increasingly challenging listings and other pro-heritage decisions. How can systems for recognition of heritage (especially at local government level) be changed to achieve input and ownership by community?

5. Workshops with communities show that people value a wider range of places and features than are recognised by registers. There are a variety of views about heritage, yet heritage organisations have promulgated standard criteria for listing. Is heritage only what practitioners /statutory provisions say it is?

6. Whilst many people appreciate heritage, they may also have other conflicting views, e.g./about avoiding impacts on private ownership, or the right to change places to suit current fashion/standards. How hard should the practitioner try to keep heritage places, when there is little apparent community support?

7. Heritage systems have developed around listing and controls, usually located within planning or environment portfolios. In a community or arts portfolio (or division of a Council), the objectives and emphasis would focus on involving people and delivering an appreciation of heritage (with controls as an adjunct). Should heritage be in a cultural/community portfolio or in planning; what's your opinion?

## **Discussion Summary**

Discussion ranged over a variety of issues related to the theme with entertaining and helpful contributions from a variety of people and places, including the Caribbean and Scotland.

### Issues: What guides practice?

The net can be used as a guide for action about issues and for inspiration. The technique of asking 'Who else do it talk to?' is good for finding community opinions

### Issue: Role of the practitioner - How hard should a practitioner push to save a place when there is little or no community support?

Response: Awareness raising for community, if place really significant. Community must be responsible for its heritage. Grass roots support is essential. In hard to achieve an informed community so that debate is rational (especially with conflicts). Fine line between advocate and advisor. Practitioner can't back away from professional judgement just to keep the peace; a practitioner defines ones role at the beginning rather than during a skirmish! Community views need to be wholeheartedly considered by practitioners

### Issue: Community ownership of heritage (and lists)

Response: Community ownership essential, especially as being on a list is 'no sure protection' against big developments, and people less ready to nominate privately-owned sites than publicly owners buildings/sites. Loss of valued sites stirs community action about heritage. Community valuing of heritage must work hand in hand with

statutory protection. Energy needs to be injected into community activist sector and practitioners can work in their own communities.

Issue: Need to develop a more informed/skilled activist sector

Response: Help the community become familiar with heritage language; practitioners can provide help in their own communities. People unaware of archaeological values - practitioners and community (at least in WA)

Issue: Balancing development with preservation and gauging the community opinion

Response: Concepts of value to the community (social value) hard to understand and assess; conflicts between local views /values and national (or out of town) views - how can practitioners gauge local significance and reconcile different views?

Issue: Is heritage only what practitioners/statutory provisions say it is?

Response: So many lists suggest thoroughness and perfect knowledge. It's important to let communities know that it is OK and important to defend places not on lists. Basic approach of assessing significance vital. Are places doomed if not caught in the net of lists?

**Issues for further discussion**

Some topics are worthy of further discussion to improve the heritage 'system':

- Further discussion of select issues could help improve heritage systems and practice:
- Ways of 'protecting heritage' in addition to listing
- Assisting community understanding/appreciation of heritage (not just listing)
- Links or heritage to community portfolio's (not just planning/environment)

**Discussion: What guides are there for the work we do?**

**Peter Marquis-Kyle**

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 10:33 AM

Stuff on the net can be your guide.

Search out what other people say about whatever issue is your concern. You'll find guidance (and inspiration).

For example, I just looked at some web sites about mobile phone towers -- how they spoil the character of the places they are plonked in, and what people can do to fight the menace. A lot of guidance there.

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**laurag**

Moderator

Posts: 20

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:21 AM

RE: how hard should a practitioner push to save a place when no community support.... if the community don't value their heritage- then what does the practitioner see or know that they don't? Perhaps an awareness raising exercise for the community if the place is really of cultural heritage significance... I believe at the end of the day the community (who ever that is!) must have responsibility for the recognition, protection, management and conservation of their heritage. if they are not empowered with 'ownership' of their heritage then the practitioners and everyone else can do all they like, it goes no where... it must have grass roots support... so if as a practitioner you believe strongly in the value of a place... then convince the community of its worth.... in ever such a subtle way.....

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:01 PM

Some comments on contributions - the web can provide information about the types of things people are concerned about. But could it be a reliable forum for discussion or input about a particular issue?

Now that professional systems have been established for heritage - why shouldn't the community trust the professionals to follow the systems? Why does the community have to check up on professionals???

**Lorraine Cairnes**

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:04 PM

Laurag has mentioned a most important issue: community ownership, the need for community knowledge, and how hard a practitioner should push to conserve values. It is so difficult to achieve an "informed" community so that debate is rational.

The role of the practitioner rarely extends to effective contribution to the knowledge building process - and so the information presented by the practitioner can well be out of step with the community's current views or values. Ideally, the process of knowledge sharing happens as a structured part of a process, but it is often too rushed or too late, when "hard" positions have been taken and people are less likely to negotiate and reach compromise.

So - how hard should the practitioner push? Well, we can't back away from the facts or our professional judgement about a place just to keep the peace. Integrity and credibility is so hard won, and so easily compromised! In walking the fine line between advocate and advisor, I prefer to define my role before rather than during the skirmish!

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:48 PM

Hi Lorraine - there is so much heritage around us it must be difficult for a community to be informed, let alone image an world without these things/places.

I agree it's vital for the professional to define their role in a process and not to play different roles with different people. Perhaps a key point here is that in any process there needs to be someone in the process chain who can ensure that the community views are wholeheartedly considered. Also, the community has the same information as the professionals (bureaucrat's etc.) and is not being 'trumped' by the professionals knowledge whenever issues are raised.

How can we improve our practice?

**Helen Wilson**

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:07 PM

Continuing the discussion of community ownership, the need for community knowledge, and how hard a practitioner should push to conserve a valued site- As a heritage advisor in NSW I am about to embark on a Community Heritage Study in the Council area I work in and know the crunch for the council will be getting sites on the LEP list. However I also know from hard experience that being on a list is no sure protection- Councilor's have no problem in allowing demolitions should a big \$ development come along, if there is little community outcry at the time. The private ownership 'my home is my castle' attitude means that people are less ready to nominate privately owned sites than publicly owned buildings/sites. It's only through substantial losses of valued sites that my community seems to be stirred into both action and calls for protection.

So in other words, the community valuing of their own heritage and the statutory protection needs to work hand in hand. I hope through lots of group discussion & feedback in the Heritage Study consultation process my communities will opt for protection and then be prepared to back it up later when places are under threat. If statutory protection is not acceptable, then we will probably decide that more consultation is necessary and try and come at it from the education angle...

**Peter Marquis-Kyle**

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:19 PM

An interesting thread starting -- thanks Lorraine and Meredith -- about the role of the practitioner...

It seems to me that, over the last generation, heritage practitioners have joined the mainstream and become many, and even respectable. The community activist sector (think of the National Trusts), while it has grown somewhat, has not grown and matured to the same extent.

Time to inject energy in that sector! More committed, effective amateurs are needed (I mean amateur in a fond, approving way).

Of course, practitioners can be good activists too, although (as Lorraine says) there is a fine line to walk...

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:51 PM

The points raised by Helen and Peter are linked. Perhaps we are expecting too much in the heritage studies: the community is undertaking several things at once - reconising and learning about its heritage form one another and at virtually the same time being asked to pass judgement by listing. From my experience, communities are loath to pass judgement without confidence that others share their values. Perhaps the process could de extended in time so that the wider community becomes more knowledgeable before formal listing, rather than rely upon the actively involved group.

Can heritage studies be extended and information published e.g. on the web before any decisions. Sure, some people might take advantage of this and demolish but while heritage is it?

**Ava Tomlinson**

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:07 PM

Its interesting viewing the discussion and seeing the issues as the are unraveled. They are similar. Here in the Caribbean (I am in Jamaica) we face issues of balancing development with preservation of one's heritage. Issues arise as to where to strike the balance between what site/monument is destroyed to build the so much needed highway for an expanding mobile population. Or what guides can one put in place? Where do we strike the balance between preservation and development? Does the community really care about these sites and monuments, after all, they don't bring the votes for the election or the income for the family. These are just some of the issues I have in mind to share with you, and how does one go about putting in guides on these issues.

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:18 PM

Welcome Ava - great to have your contribution! can you tell us more about how the community has been involved in heritage in your community?

**Lorraine Cairnes**

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:12 PM

Meredith challenged us to think about "Is heritage only what practitioners /statutory provisions say it is?"

In many projects the first step for a practitioner or the community is to go "list-fishing" which has become a productive sport (rivaled only by that other great pastime, "guidelines hunting"). Here in NSW, in addition to all the other lists, registers and schedules, we now have a State Heritage Register and a State Heritage Inventory. Having so many lists makes it all the more likely that we will have a good bag of listings for a place at the end of our day, to show to those who had doubts that a place is important. Then we can say. "Don't just accept my word for it, someone else thought these fish were worth catching".

However, do all these lists inadvertently imply that the places on the lesser lists (local) are less important than those on the BIG lists? And that if a place can't be found on any list, it is undersized, of no value, merely bycatch and must be thrown back to chance its future with the sharks? (Sorry, one of my past lives was in NSW Fisheries.)

Having so many lists suggests thoroughness and perfect knowledge. It is important to let communities - and practitioners - know that it is ok and important to defend a place even if it is not on any list. The back-to-basics approach of "significance" - first describing the values of a place - should be a priority for all of us in heritage practice.

Or are places doomed unless they are captured in the net of statutory compliance?

Just a thought!

### **Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:52 PM

Attention all conference registrants - do you agree with Lorraine - that places are doomed unless they get on statutory registers?

And that heritage is like the food change - the small things necessarily get eaten?

What is the role of the heritage community? If we know the system undermines local community values what should we do about it????

### **Peter Marquis-Kyle**

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:13 PM

OK Meredith, I'll take the bait (my last angling reference, I promise).

I am not comfortable with the language of 'local', 'regional', 'state', 'national' as applied to significance. It is a crudity that comes from the statutory listing process. It is too often taken as a measurement of 'how much' significance, when we need to know the 'how' and the 'why' -- these are more subtle and complicated things.

And, if I read correctly between Meredith's lines, I agree with her. A place held in fond regard in a community can be safer than one protected by the Heritage Act of <insert state here>.

What should we do if The System undermines local community values? Well, we are members of our communities aren't we (as well, perhaps, as practitioners)? So, get active (if we are not hobbled by being practitioners).

### **Lucy Williams**

Member

Posts: 5

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:39 PM

I'll trawl along with this analogy too.

In pursuing the sport of 'list-fishing' and 'guidelines hunting' mentioned by Lorraine, I am often reminded of how these lists were usually compiled with little or no input from non-practitioners.

Practitioners may construct levels of significance, but so is the language we use.

Through a process of education, we need to impart the principles of the Burra Charter etc to non-practitioners.

'Have the language - will understand the concepts'

### **Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 06:06 PM

OK Lorraine suggests we should make it clear that the lists are not finite; Peter suggests we can take action within our own communities; and Lucy says 'have the language-will understand the concept'. Planners, administrators and developers are always asking for certainty and 'sticking by the rules'. Perhaps there is some way in which places and features that have not been formally recognised but are known locally to be appreciated - such as views of Sydney harbour, can be protected by general provisions??

### **Gaye Nayton**

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 07:25 PM

Are places doomed unless they get on lists. I think when it comes to archaeological sites the answer is yes. Mainly because no one knows they are there to protect.

You can't see an archaeological site which has no standing fabric component. The first thing anyone knows about it is when the bulldozer rips through it. Even then the bulldozer driver usually does not recognise that he has disturbed anything.

This is a real worry in WA as such archaeological sites basically are not listed anywhere. The historians and architects say that places from the 1830s don't still exist, only one or two 1840s sites are around etc etc. There is a lot more of the heritage of frontier WA still around than is realised, but unless a site happens to be linked to a standing building, like first government house, which is in the grounds of present government house, there are no funds to identify and list it. The identification/listing process, at least here, is canted towards the sites we already know have heritage value not to finding sites we don't know about.

**NickBridgland**

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 08:27 PM

It is interesting for me, as a practitioner in Scotland, to hear the ongoing debate in the home of the Burra Charter. The adoption of the Burra Charter, with its concentration on significance, is still a topic for debate here. It has been adopted by the National Trust for Scotland but, while regarded with respect by government agencies, has not been adopted much more widely. A more worrying trend has been the use of the Charter by developers as a way of cloaking their own proposals with respectability (I generalise, of course). The terms of the charter allow an awful lot of paper to be produced which very few people will have the time to read, let alone digest and assess critically. While concepts such as historical and scientific significance are difficult to fudge because of the experience of practitioners in this field, social significance, that aspect of the study which will deal with community use and attitude is far more nebulous.

In Scotland, surprisingly for such a small country, we have communities in the Highlands who will have a very different view of their heritage to that held by the practitioners who tend to be based in the large Lowland cities. These communities also tend to be on the borderline of economic viability. They do not have a clear view of their heritage because, understandably, their views are very much more holistic than dealing with such an esoteric topic. I suspect that this will be true of the majority of communities.

We also have the concept of National, Regional and Local importance and, like you, find that it can be translated as High, Medium and Low. Working at the National level, I get involved only in those sites which are deemed to be of National importance. I am though aware that the significance, which a site holds nationally, may not be the same as the local significance. Indeed what is cherished in a site at a National level may be an aspect which is deplored at the local level.

I would welcome feedback on how others out there have sought to get a true gauge of social significance from local communities and have, where necessary, managed to reconcile competing national and local views regarding a site.

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:10 PM

Assessing significance is an imperfect process, but it sure is better than most other 'methods' and a good way of setting down all the important aspects of a place and its history. Assessing social value can be a difficult process. Where places have been the subject of controversy the controversy itself provides some indication of people's views. Where places are well accepted as heritage, it is always likely that the local community will have its own relationship with the place, through their direct and regular experience of it, through work, local events and people. Rather than judge 'how much' the local views count, perhaps we could accept that the local experience, stories etc. should always be an important factor – at least to be recorded, interpreted and the relevant fabric kept.

I cant think of any direct equivalents to in Australia, but in recent times some members of the federal government have attempted to remove a site of national significance - the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns near the old Parliament house in Canberra. It is a

site of national significance (recognised in registers) for its role (and continuing role) in providing a base for Aboriginal action and as consciousness raising for indigenous issues and (more recently) reconciliation. There has been suggestions that some locals don't like it – the signs of protest or the impact on the grass lawns, I am not sure exactly; but it is also a source of great pride to many Australians.

Nick –try the database. Other participants – any suggestions for Nick?

Tomorrow we can continue this debate and start some new discussions, any suggestions for new topics about what guides our practice? And how we reconcile conflicting views? Good evening Australia and good morning Scotland!

## **Ava Tomlinson**

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 10:36 PM

Good morning from Jamaica. (6am) Meredith you asked me to share with you how my community is involved in heritage here.

I would like to approach the term community from different perspectives. (1) The business community (2) the non-governmental organizations NGO, (3) the people who live with the immediate environment of heritage sites and monuments. I am also looking at heritage from the built environment perspective example sites and monuments.

Some interest in the business community has recently embraced the heritage tourism concept and a means to an economic growth. Since this is a fairly new concept being explored it is in its embryotic stages with projects such as Port Royal, a major archaeological site being poised for heritage tourism in the near future. So how has the people who live within the immediate environment respond to this, some welcome the idea for economic growth, others are skeptical about the changes that will results from hundreds of persons converging on a relatively quite and crime free community.

Then there are the NGO's. Each parish in the island (of which there are fourteen) has its parish heritage foundations which acts as a liaison between the immediate local community and the Heritage Trust the government agency responsible for Heritage. They function as community watchdogs for their sites. This is not always functional. Nevertheless, they provide a medium within which heritage information is dispatched to local communities.

Then there are the local communities which must grapple with seeing their community expand, while compromising on their heritage. While the heritage practitioners may have the ideals of the monument being preserved, the community wants to see new infrastructure which will provide employment for people. As well as the government agencies which have to compromise between development of these local communities and heritage preservation. There are times when reality check does it kick in, if one doesn't listen to the needs of the local communities which might not be heritage orientated problems do arise, such as, why preserve a site when there is need for housing development? (Taking into consideration we have a population of over 2.5 million people on an island of 11 411sq mls.

So its all well and good to have sites registered and gazetted as national monuments, but when it comes to the protection and use of the site it goes back to how the immediate community values that site as a part of their heritage, and whether or not they see it fit for preservation, and if so, at what cost?

I will log on later today.

**Sheridan**

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:03 AM

I am feeling increasingly ambivalent about the value of lists per se in the conservation process. We have spent decades of energy preparing a wide variety of lists and there are still more to develop (how thinly the postwar era is represented) but poor conservation decisions are too often made regardless of the listed recognition of a place.

If the planners, politicians and decision-makers -small and large- do not feel there is significant and demonstrable community interest in a decision, no effective conservation action will ensue.

I agree that a key technique is forming and articulating community and practitioner partnerships and alliances- but we need to act more holistically- finding community relationships which transcend barriers such as "only local" or "of insufficient architectural merit" and move the conservation analysis and discussion into broader community values- eg environmental sustainability- or indeed initially unlikely or narrower values of a different but politically relevant/attractive community focus- eg conserving historic houses and European carp extermination- perhaps an obscure connection, but effective in at least one case with which I am familiar.

There is a relevant discussion in a new English Heritage report called Power of Place (refer [www.english.heritage.org.uk](http://www.english.heritage.org.uk)). See the section: People and place- reflecting the wider view.

**Helen Wilson**

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 09:38 AM

I am also not comfortable with the language of 'local', 'regional', 'state', 'national' as applied to significance and agree with Peter that it is often seen as a measurement of 'how much' significance a place has.

I constantly deal with the implications of this system in an 'economically challenged' rural community. Our council cannot afford to fund conservation projects, most people in town are flat out keeping their businesses open in a community with very high levels of unemployment, and our farmers in surrounding areas have to plough all their money into production to stay alive-there is nothing for heritage places...The real implications of lack of political recognition of local significance is lack of funding available. Responsibility is devolved to local government for management of heritage. I would agree local communities appropriately manage heritage, but with this increased responsibility, there is frequently no money to support heritage projects and the community resources won't stretch. We try to be positive and inventive, and put in lots of effort but often the bottom line is the need for some \$'s. This is not meant to be a negative spiel...just trying to redress the balance. What do others think?

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:33

Welcome to the second day of our discussion about 'what guides are there for the work we do?

It's hot and sticky in Sydney! Not good weather for thinking.

We addressed several of the starter questions in a roundabout way. For today lets start with some new issues.

Anecdotal evidence from practitioner's show that involving people associated with a place brings a more fine-grained appreciation of its meaning to people. Knowledge about the events is very memorable. For example: when the Woolwich dry dock was emptied in preparation for work, lots of fish were stranded and the workers would ring their union mates who came to collect the fish for their family and friends.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS TYPE OF ANEDOTAL EVIDENCE ABOUT A PLACE? AND HOW DOES IT HELP IN ESTABLISHING SIGNIFICANCE?

THE BURRA CHARTER (ARTICLE 12) STATES THAT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF A PLACE SHOULD PROVIDE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE FOR WHOM THE PLACES HAS SPECIAL ASSOCIAIOTNS AND MEANINGS – HOW CAN PRACTITIONERS HELP THIS TO BE IMPLEMENTED?

### **Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:34 AM

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### **Camilla McRae**

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:43 PM

Meredith, lists, guidelines and all are okay to identify and guide practitioners, but when the lists are incomplete and the people with the legal responsibility for protection of

(mostly) 'local' heritage (excuse the categorisation) have absolutely no interest in understanding the issues of significance, conservation and wouldn't look for guidelines even if their lives depended on it what point in having either?

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:57 PM

Camilla

your circumstances sound frustrating! Being an apparent minority can't be easy. Some people's views count more than others and perhaps the opinions of outsiders may influence the 'unnoticing' local? Also, some people don't want to identify with the concept of 'heritage', as they understand it.

What would others do in your situation?

**Peter Marquis-Kyle**

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:24 PM

Meredith asked what could be done about Camilla's problem of lack of 'local' interest. Tough question. Here's my answer -- it's what I do a bit of, but not as much as I would like:

Go and visit Camilla at Inverell (or someone else you know, wherever they live) and talk about the heritage issues there, see the places, enjoy finding out about them, give support, find common ground. I certainly enjoy doing this (even though I am a shy person), and I have a thread of connection with the place and people, kept up by emails and phone calls from time to time.

If there is a bit of this kind of mutual support, the 'local' activists don't feel like they are pedaling the treadmill on their own. And the 'supporter' gets a low-cost, high-value cultural tourism experience as the personal quest of a local.

If you don't have the opportunity to make these connections in the ordinary course of your life, there are other ways. It just happens that the Tom Roberts Festival is happening around Inverell 27 April to 6 May. See the details (soon) on the web at <http://www.tomrobertsfestival.com.au>

See you there?

**Susan Macdonald**

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 04:34 PM

I am coming in late to this discussion...

What worries me at the moment is that there seems to be a lack of confidence in the system that is in fact working against us all the time. In NSW we have a legacy of heritage studies which we as professionals seem all too ready to criticise when discussing the fate of individual items. This seems to be undermining all the good works of the past. All those heritage studies were not bad - they perhaps were not perfect but so what, they have provided a valuable basis for recognising heritage in many areas of NSW and in raising the profile of heritage within those communities.

The move towards community based heritage studies will help gain greater consensus for heritage but unless we can stand by the decisions made in the past then we can never build on what we have. Within different professions there are always differences of opinion but I wonder whether the lack of consensus within our profession about what is worth preserving for the future is something that has always been there or our views being polarised by the system we work within? It seems that we as a profession do not present a very confident view to the public - so how can we expect them to recognise heritage values.

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 05:21 PM

<http://www.atrax.net.au/UBB/icons/icon10.gif>

For people coming on line now, this forum continues until 9am (Australian Eastern Summer Time) Thursday 1 March. I will then prepare a summary of the discussion which will be loaded back into the site on Friday 2 March.

A single Post-conference forum will be available for those who want to keep discussing issues.

The site will remain online until Mid April 2001. After the conference the organisers will be taking into account your feedback and considering the future of the site and whether it might be maintained on an ongoing basis, or used for future online conferences.

More contributions are welcome!

**Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 06:13 PM

This forum continues until 9.00am tomorrow (Thursday). So time for some more contributions.

What ideas guide your practice in involving local people in heritage?

**Nicholas Hall**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 07:49 PM

To put one perspective on your question Meredith, one of the most useful things which I have learned working with Aboriginal people and other cultural groups overseas in working on local heritage issues is one of the simplest - it is posing the question with the most open approach "Who else should I talk to?" and NEVER STOP ASKING IT!

Not only is this question crucial in identifying indigenous custodians and stakeholders, but it helps in all stages of the process from identifying interests, understanding significance, to making sure issues, objectives and strategies are realistically understood and planned for. It sounds a bit obvious and we can't have open-ended processes, but I find that as I keep moving geographically. Over time in projects, that asking, "Who else should I talk to?" takes me interesting places and keeps the process focussed on people and their relationship to what they feel is important (place, issue, tradition or whatever). In my experience, people never stop popping up during a project and undiscovered gems or spoilers are always out there. You can't stop asking the question, because not only do people change over the life of a project or process, but everything else is in flux too. A heritage professional simply works as a snapshot in time, but sometimes I think this gets forgotten.

### **Nicholas Hall**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 08:02 PM

Oh, one other thing:

I want to mention to everyone who reads this that we have been developing at the Australian Heritage Commission a new guide to help people through the process of protecting the values of places. It is a set of resource materials which integrates the planning for protection of natural, indigenous and historic values, and is based on the Revised Burra Charter, the Australian Natural Heritage Charter and the nationally award-winning book, Protecting Local Heritage Places.

The kit consists of a website, a CD and a presenters/trainers/group leaders kit (with a user guide, PowerPoint presentation and handout material. All the materials take people through 10 steps, which relate to basic planning steps and the process in the charters.

For those interested have a look at the website at:

[www.heritage.gov.au/protecting.html](http://www.heritage.gov.au/protecting.html)

If you want to find out more about the CD or other materials, email me, by clicking on the email icon above this message. I know this is a bit of an advert, but I thought people may like to know, and I have a vested interest in getting people using it!

### **Meredith Walker**

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 09:41 PM

Nicholas, that provides some guidance for us all. There is still time for comment.

Remember you can you can email each other directly using the envelope logo above each person's message

Comments on the conference and ideas for further discussion after this conference are most welcome. The site will stay open until at least mid April 2001. Before then the organisers will be working out the future of the site, possible future conferences etc!