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# Newsletter



FEDERATION of  
AUSTRALIAN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

*Because history matters*



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I feel lucky to take over the role of editor of the FAHS Newsletter from Bernadette Flynn for such an interesting issue.

I looked all over Australia for the most diverse representation of our built, natural, and Indigenous heritage to share with you. Your historical societies stand to make a meaningful contribution to Australia's heritage, through your knowledge, skills, and power of advocacy.

This is exemplified in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's struggle to save the Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne. Also in this issue, the National Trust share their extreme measures to restore a heritage site in New South Wales, and tell the story of how they breathed life into

a heritage building in South Australia, activating it for audiences. Meanwhile in Katanning, WA, heritage is repurposed for the 21st Century, describing how the same building has been an economic success for the town twice over.

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland has exciting news about their heritage site, the Dig Tree. This is juxtaposed with the treatment of Indigenous heritage, when Canberra & District Historical Society explore the wide-reaching consequences of the destruction of heritage, and how the community has been affected by the felling of culturally significant trees.

Sophie Shilling, Online Outreach Officer



As I write this, my first preface to the Newsletter as President of the Federation, debates about the role of heritage and its contribution to contemporary life, are in play in every state and territory of Australia. Some of those debates are captured in this issue. The clear message from these individual articles is that preserving heritage structures, and the stories that make them meaningful, matter hugely to our members, and to their surrounding communities. The passion of each group shines clearly through their contributions.

As so often with heritage issues, it is community volunteer effort that has proved crucial in preserving these places – seeking heritage listing, fundraising for preservation works and then the on-going work of maintenance and preservation. Almost all of these pieces tell stories of success – a building preserved, a significant place protected and interpreted – but one article tells a salutary tale of destruction. Whether intended or not, the

destruction of two significant trees in Canberra recently reminds us that even heritage listing is not a guarantee of long-term preservation. In this sad instance, the inquiry process is still proceeding.

### **Historical societies have been instrumental in preserving heritage in almost every district of Australia.**

Many of our societies meet in heritage buildings, preserving the structures and interpreting the places as a core part of their work. Others contribute through researching and recording intangible heritage – the oral histories and ‘folklore’ that contribute so much to the spirit of a community or place. Together they define much of what makes each place distinctive. Almost always it has been historical society members who have been instrumental in the long campaigns leading to preservation in the first place. Without this volunteer effort a huge amount of our history and

heritage would have been lost forever.

Thankfully the work of our volunteers is more valued now than at some times in the recent past. Almost every tourism strategy includes history and heritage in its list of ‘attractions’ and there are many other areas of community endeavour, from strategies for preserving rural communities to active ageing in place, that depend for their success on the effort of community historians. But finding support for the ongoing work of preservation and for the historical research that brings it to life is still as difficult as ever. There is a wonderful opportunity here for the political party that can see the benefit of this work and can tap into the huge support base community historians represent. If you know your local members of parliament – point that out to them! We will be asking what each of the parties intends before the next federal election.

Margaret Anderson, FAHS  
President



# Restoring and activating heritage for audiences at Glencoe Woolshed

The National Trust's Glencoe branch were given custodianship of the heritage-listed Glencoe Woolshed only two years ago, and since then have worked tirelessly to not only restore the building, but to breathe life into the story of this South Australian icon. Carol Grbich describes this process, and how the building is activated for audiences.

Taking on the care of an old woolshed and restoring and promoting it was the task of the newly formed 47th branch of the National Trust late in 2016. It was a daunting task, but seeing this beautiful old 1863 building slowly deteriorating in a paddock in the centre of the village of Glencoe in the South East of South Australia was of greater concern. Locals gathered round to assess the damage – poor drainage had resulted in damp patches and crumbling limestone, access was difficult for those with mobility limitations, ancient storyboards were hard to read and parts of a push button narrated story system had long ago been eaten through or removed. An earlier rescue had occurred in the mid 1970s when the National Trust had taken possession of the building which had been donated by a local



Glencoe Woolshed  
before the restoration.  
National Trust,  
Glencoe Branch

farmer, and the South Australian government under Don Dunstan had provided funds to replace the roof and windows which were in a sad state of decay, but little had been done since in terms of ongoing maintenance.

During 2017 money was raised and with financial support from the National Trust of South Australia, volunteer working bees resulted in the emptying and cataloguing of the many articles filling the sheep pens, and gutters and downpipes were

replaced, and electrical services were updated and concealed. Fortuitously, the National Trust have a link with a heritage skills training program which resulted in 18 people using the woolshed for a week to learn restoration and maintenance skills. Damaged and fretting stonework was replaced and repointed, the side entrance door was repaired, the internal wood oiled, and the internal baling area walls were whitewashed.

To convey the story of the woolshed to visitors, a soundscape has been installed. This operates by a movement sensor as the visitor enters the side door, providing the sounds of blade shearing and baling being undertaken, as well as those of shearers, horses, sheep and dogs in the setting. Epson Australia has donated a projector which plays a slide and video show for presentation to groups. A push button video is to be installed so visitors can see the woolshed in action – both in past times and in the more recent shearing events such as the Blades of Glencoe – which bring the setting to life in terms of operation. A book has also just been completed following the history of the Leake



Repairing the frame of  
the entrance door.  
National Trust,  
Glencoe Branch





Robert, Edward, and Letitia (Edward's daughter) Leake were all at times owners of Glencoe Station.

Source: National Trust Glencoe Branch.



The Blades of Glencoe event attracted many young people and women.

National Trust,  
Glencoe Branch

woolshed on part of the property. The Leake family's journey from Hamburg and Hull to Tasmania in the 1820s is recorded, as is the establishment of a successful merino sheep enterprise by two of the sons – Robert and Edward - in South Australia. The opening of the South Eastern part of South Australia in 1844 for settlement was the opportunity for many to make their fortunes – the high rainfall combined with rich volcanic soil was perfect for farming whether it be sheep, or in later times, crops. Conflict with traditional owners - the Boandik people, combined with claims of murder, illegitimacy, madness and a court battle over the inheritance of the Glencoe station were unearthed during the research for this book.

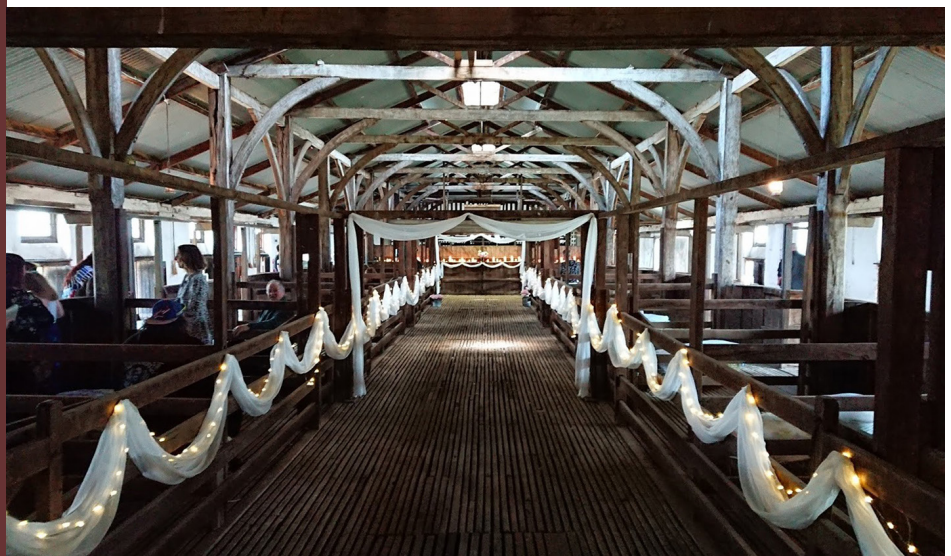
The Woolshed attracts a diverse range of people and groups, for weddings, book launches, car club stop overs, and tour groups, as well as walk-ins and self-tour visitors.

The future is looking bright for the

Woolshed; a number of projects are planned for further improvement and enhanced visitor experience, including a new interpretive centre with room for the display of wagons, wheelwrights' and smithys' workshops, and a shearer's kitchen. Updates to facilities are also planned: a new irrigation system, the installation of a secure water supply and bore, the reconstruction of the loading ramp and perimeter fences, and the installation of disabled access. Different ways of using technology to create a more interactive experience for visitors is also being investigated – in particular QR codes, timeline maps, digitised images and holograms.

For location, access information and opening hours, visit the National Trust website at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/glencoe-woolshed/>.

Carol Grbich, National Trust





# The Premier Roller Flour Mill: A new life for a town icon

Frederick Henry Piesse CMG was a farmer, businessman and politician who is credited with much of the early development of the region around Katanning and was responsible for many of Katanning's fine old buildings. He was a Justice of the Peace, chairman of the Katanning Road Board and a member of Western Australia's first parliament under responsible government in the Forrest government becoming Minister for Railways and deputy Premier. He was a Western Australian delegate to the Federal Convention of 1897. Frederick and his brother Charles sold their business in Williams to provide a mobile store for workers building the Great Southern Railway. The new railway was built in two sections. The first sods were turned at Beverley and Albany simultaneously on 20 October 1886 and was completed on 4 February 1889. The two sections met five kilometres north of the current Katanning town-site.

There were about six families in the area who had been given leases to start farming, and Frederick could see the potential of this tiny farming and railway settlement, so there he decided to set up his store and build Australia's first roller flour mill.

Premier Roller Flour Mill



The F&C Piesse & Co Premier Roller Flour Mill, around 1915.

The construction of the mill in 1891 saw new settlers flock to the area because they had somewhere to sell their surplus grain. With its large power plant, the mill was able to provide Katanning with its electricity until 1961 making it the first place in WA to have electric street lighting. In 1927, after the death of Piesse, the mill was sold to a group of local farmers and business people (who formed the Katanning Flour Milling Co) for £25,000, with the Piesse family retaining a major shareholding.

The new company, which had adopted the name "Swan Flour" for the product, ran the mill for several decades until it ceased production in 1970.

It was suggested that the site would

be developed as a major retail-shopping complex, but this was prevented when a local company was formed, and they purchased the mill for \$70,000. The mill then continued until 1979.

The premises were then acquired by the Shire of Katanning in 1980 and converted into a museum through the efforts of Ainslie Evans and the Katanning Historical Society. Also in 1980, the National Trust included the mill in its records, classifying it as an historical building.

**"The former mill is historically important not only for its influence on the development of Katanning but also for the success of its products in overcoming prejudice against Western Australian flour", said a report in the Trust's magazine.**

**"Architecturally it is one of a group of mills of similar type which were scattered through the wheatbelt but which have become rare and, from the point of view of industrial archaeology, the survival of so much of the machinery is of great importance".**



The interior and exterior of the building have been meticulously restored.

Source: Premier Mill Hotel.





Shortly after the council purchased the mill and the intention to turn it into a museum was announced, the National Trust offered a dollar for dollar grant of \$22,000 to aid the restoration.

### Restoration and Transformation

In recent years the old mill had been once again neglected and fell into state of disrepair, causing the local shire council to look at a number of options. The building, situated in the centre of town, was offered for sale by the council for \$1. with the proviso that it be restored by the purchaser. This offer was taken up by Nigel Oakey, CEO of the Dome Café group, in early 2016 with the intention of turning it into a boutique hotel.

It was always going to be an ambitious project as Mr Oakey had decided to retain as much of the original machinery as possible within the building. Using a professional historian, the company researched the history of the mill and its founder Frederick Piesse to help retain its character and stay true to the original construction. The construction team sourced timber of a similar period and located locally made bricks produced by Piesse's brickworks when the mill was originally constructed.

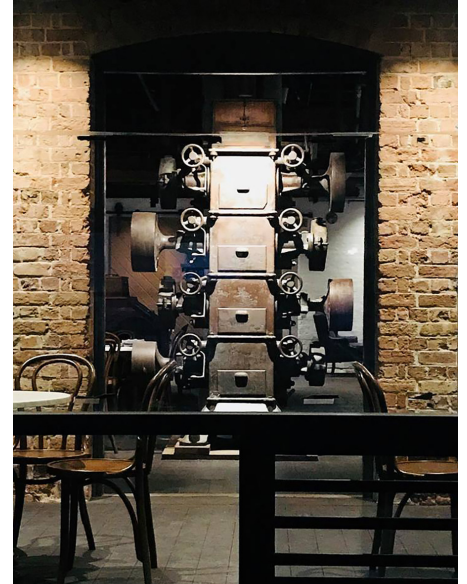
The original budget for the project was \$4 million but it ended up being much more as Mr Oakey wanted to go "all out" and create a genuine luxurious experience for guests. The ground floor is occupied by a Dome café while the basement has been into the Cordial Wine Bar, and the Premier Mill Hotel occupies the top two floors of the building, with 22 rooms for guests.

Although the Katanning community was a little sceptical when the sale of the mill was first announced, the care with which the restoration has progressed has convinced locals that the Mill's character would remain. Locals were pleased to see original equipment restored and reinstalled throughout the building. The official opening attracted quite a crowd and the people of Katanning are pleased to see this town icon being put to good use. Once again, the Mill is an important part of Katanning's economy, but for quite a different reason!

For more information and to make a reservation, visit the Premier Mill Hotel website at

<http://premiermillhotel.com/>

Arthur Todd, Lost Katanning & Katanning Historical Society  
<https://lostkatanning.com/>



**Utilitarian details of the flour mill are now very much on-trend for a boutique hotel.**

Source: Premier Mill Hotel



## When heritage is destroyed: A tale of two trees

When we nominate a place of cultural significance to a government body under a legislative act, we do so with the anticipation that the place will be afforded protection. When the government body accepts the nomination, recognises its heritage significance and inscribes the place on to a register of heritage places with legal protection, we gain a strong expectation that the place will be protected and conserved for our present and future generations. This is what the various state and territory heritage registers are for. But what happens when the protective mechanisms of the heritage act fail, and the place is unexpectedly destroyed? This is what has happened in Canberra when two heritage significant trees displaying evidence of past Aboriginal cultural practices were deliberately felled. One was felled in 2017 and the other in 2018.

In June 1991, a small team of experts comprising two archaeologists, a botanist, an arborist and a member of the local Aboriginal community carried out a survey in one of Canberra's southern suburbs. They were examining the old growth eucalyptus trees which had survived the rural land clearing and and later the urban development. In the suburbs of Wanniasa and Kambah in Canberra's Tuggeranong Valley, there are many of these trees scattered in what are now front yards, playgrounds, school yards, reserves and road verges. They are the remnants of a pre-European society. Some of the trees bear the scarring of deliberate bark removal, a long-standing practice by Aboriginal people who used the bark slabs

for shields, coolamons, shelter and canoes. It was these trees that the small team were looking for. They identified a clustering of seventeen of these trees, recorded them and nominated them to a Commonwealth heritage register (the former Register of the National Estate). Later, following legislative changes, the trees were transferred to the ACT Heritage Places Register. The group of trees was also Classified by the ACT National Trust. While each of the trees bearing

recognised that these drainage lines had been used by Aboriginal people as corridors as they moved in and out of the Tuggeranong Valley. They were the areas where it was easy to walk through the valley to and from the Murrumbidgee. On their way they would stop when needed and carefully remove bark from trees to build shelters, or coolamons to carry their infants or the equipment they needed. They expertly removed the bark slabs, just enough for what they needed, but not enough

to kill the trees. The trees identified by the team in 1991, are the physical evidence of this cultural practice which, with the settlement by Europeans, now no longer exists. And it is this that makes these trees culturally and historically important in understanding the deep human past of Canberra.



Culturally scarred old-growth eucalyptus on the playing grounds of Wanniasa Hills Primary School, Canberra. The tree was heritage listed and a favourite with the children until it was cut down and completely removed due to an 'unintentional administrative error'.

Source: Jon Rhodes, c.1998

So why were two trees deliberately chopped down when they had been on a heritage register for over twenty-five years? The trees were Blakley's Redgum (*Eucalyptus blakleyi*), a smooth bark tree common to the area. One tree, located, within the playing fields of a primary school, bore a 'shield' size scar and was a favourite of the

young students who had learnt about its Aboriginal connection. Because it had a distorted trunk it also made a good climbing tree. The other tree, much larger, was located about one-hundred metres away in a small reserve and bore a large 'canoe' type scar. Both trees were photographed and documented in a recent book, *Cage of Ghosts*, by Jon Rhodes<sup>1</sup>. We have been unable to ascertain why they were cut down; perhaps it had something to do with health and safety reasons.



But the real question to be asked is why were they not recognised as heritage-listed trees by those responsible for cutting them down? This was the question that was put to the ACT Minister for Heritage.

An investigation by the Minister's Department concluded that it was not 'malicious activity' that resulted in the removal of trees, but rather a 'genuine and unintentional administrative error'.<sup>2</sup> By whom has not been specified. However, the ACT Government has taken the issue seriously and at the time of writing were in the stage of 'ongoing investigations'. So,

what have we lost? We have lost two individual culturally important trees, both heritage listed. We have lost confidence in the legislative processes and compliance to the Heritage Act in protecting our heritage places. Archaeologically, we have seen a diminution in the marked trees as a complex marking the targeted use of this species of trees along a former communication corridor through the valleys of southern ACT. Most importantly, the indigenous people of the ACT have lost more physical reminders of their culture.

The removal of the trees is of serious concern to local indigenous

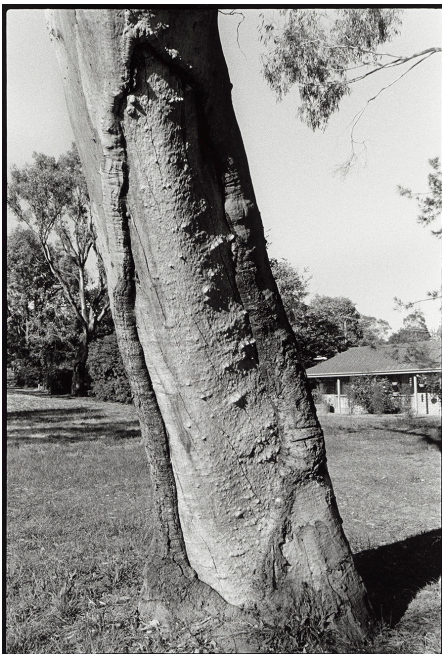
groups as well as the National Trust (ACT) and the Canberra and District Historical Society. The unauthorised removal of these heritage trees raises serious issues about the adequacy of existing administrative mechanisms - clearly these mechanisms have failed, and the heritage loss has been significant. This situation could be seen as part of a wider malaise in heritage protection - poor and under-resourced administration which, through lack of capacity and/or will to enforce heritage protections, results in the loss of the community's heritage. Much improved practical and fail-safe protections are needed, and it is the government's responsibility to implement such protections.

The protectors have simply failed to protect. An unfortunate and 'unintentional' error twice done, to be sure, but not ones that should be accepted by the public or those responsible.

Dr Peter Dowling (Councillor) and Nick Swain (President) of the Canberra & District Historical Society <http://www.canberrahistory.org.au/>

<sup>1</sup> Jon Rhodes, *Cage of Ghosts*, Darkwood, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Letter, 15 October 2018, from Minister for the Environment and Heritage to Dr Peter Dowling.



Left: Old-growth eucalyptus bearing a 'canoe-type' scar. The tree was heritage listed and was part of a group of trees bearing scars from bark removal.

Source: Jon Rhodes, c.1998

Below: The same tree in 2018. The scar is visible on the lower side. It was felled due to an administrative error, despite being listed on the ACT Heritage Register for over 25 years.

Source: Peter Dowling, 2018.



# The Dig Tree Reserve on Cooper Creek in south-west Queensland

The Burke and Wills Dig Tree stands on the bank of Cooper Creek and on Depot Camp LXV (65), a well-known depot of the ill-fated 1860-61 Burke and Wills expedition. The expedition led by Robert O'Hara Burke camped at the depot on 6 December 1860, adjacent to the Boolloo Boolloo waterhole. Ten days later, four of the expedition team including Burke, with William John Wills, John King and Charles Gray left the depot and made a hurried trip to the Gulf leaving William Brahe in charge of the depot with Thomas McDonough, William Patten and Dost Mahomet. Burke gave instructions to those remaining, to stay at the camp for three months before returning to Melbourne, even if the exploring party had not returned. Immediately after the party departed, those remaining built a stockade from tree branches where the 12 horses, six camels and all their provisions were kept.

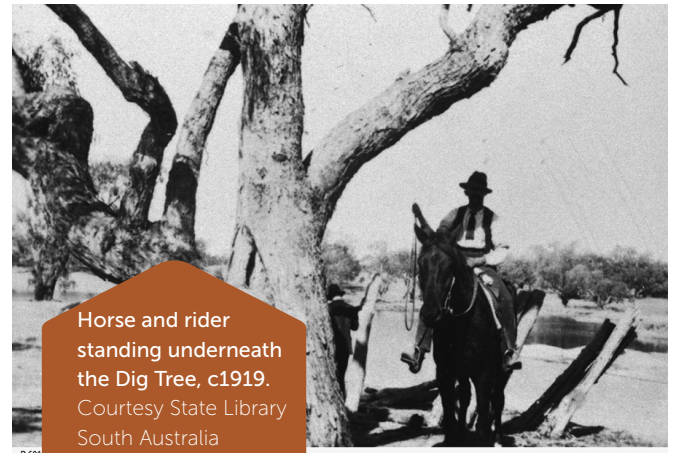
After four months and as Burke and his party had not returned, Brahe blazed messages in a tree to mark the location of a cache of stores left for the party if and when they returned. They packed 50 pounds (lb) of flour, 60lb of sugar, 20lb of rice, 15lb of dried meat in a camel trunk and buried it. The Burke party of three (Gray died on the journey) arrived back at camp LXV on the evening of 21 April 1861 to discover that Brahe and his team had departed earlier that day. Over the following months, Burke and Wills died en route to Mount Hopeless station to the south west, but King, with the assistance of Aborigines, survived and was found in a near death condition on 15 September

1861.

Search parties were sent to the locality to try to find Burke and Wills, and they and others also cut blazes into the surrounding trees. In time, a romance has built up around the Dig Tree, it has become an iconic place and is a part of the Australian historical narrative. Today, it attracts about 30,000 visitors a year and the visitation numbers are rapidly expanding.

To give protection to the site, on the 2nd July 1964, the Queensland Government excised an area of approximately one acre around the tree from the surrounding pastoral lease, declaring it a Reserve and appointing The Royal Historical Society of Queensland as the trustee. In 1985, the Reserve was surveyed and slightly expanded to 4470 square metres. The Reserve was re-gazetted in 1987 after the changes to the boundary.

The Reserve is entered on the Queensland Heritage Register and it also forms part of the Burke, Wills, King and Yandruwandha National Heritage Place on the National Heritage List. Thus, the heritage values of the Reserve are protected by both the Queensland Heritage Act 1992 and the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The Reserve includes three trees: the



Horse and rider standing underneath the Dig Tree, c1919. Courtesy State Library South Australia

Dig Tree, the Face Tree and the Brahe Tree; plus the 1937 Conrick Cairn, a more recently erected cairn and an interpretation shelter. There are also remnants of a board walk still standing adjacent to the tree.

Despite the blaze marked by Brahe disappearing due to the growing girth of the tree, the identity of the actual Dig Tree was not challenged until recently. The published research by David Phoenix conclusively rebuts the historically accepted view as to which of the three trees was the original Dig Tree. He has convincingly established that, it is the adjacent tree, however, the low-lying branch where the blaze was inserted has long disappeared.

The day to day management of the Dig Tree Reserve is undertaken by a ranger appointed by the lessees of the surrounding Nappa Merrie station. The ranger attends the Reserve daily, collects the Conservation Fees from the donation box located at the entrance to the Reserve, where a notice requires visitors to pay \$10 per vehicle or \$30 per bus to visit the site.





RHSQ Councillors, members of Burke & Wills Society, Bulloo Shire Councillors, and their CEO

The Society has an extremely important and demanding role to play in the management of this iconic location. To assist in its management, a Dig Tree Advisory Board with representatives from relevant stakeholders was established in 1996 and they meet periodically to provide input as to the management of the Reserve.

With the ever-increasing number of visitors, the information panels, the RHSQ Dig Tree website and the facilities at the Reserve were in serious need of updating. To facilitate this improvement, the RHSQ successfully applied for a grant from the Commonwealth Government Department of Environment to upgrade the website and to improve the facilities. In September 2017, four members of the RHSQ visited and assessed the Reserve, and it was apparent to them that there were two issues of concern. Firstly, the visitors were walking on and compacting the ground adjacent to the trees with the consequence that the nearby bank of the creek and the subsoil adjacent to the trees was being seriously eroded during heavy downpours. Subject

to professional advice, it was obvious that reclamation work was needed to the bank of the creek to a nearby gully and around the trees. Furthermore, to reduce the compaction of the soil by the tramping visitors a boardwalk was needed to be erected.

On our return to Brisbane, meetings were held with representatives of the Queensland Department of Environment and Science concerning funding and as the

Dig Tree Reserve is on the state heritage list, every step requires departmental approval. Survey, engineering and other reports have been received as to what can be achieved on the Reserve to satisfy the issues.

The money received from the first two grants has been expended establishing a Burke and Wills Dig Tree website - <http://www.thedigtreetree.com.au/>, drafting the Dig Tree story and the construction of the information panels including the making of moulds of the blazes that were originally engraved on the trees by the first visitors. These panels have been delivered to the Bulloo Shire Council awaiting installation.

An application for funding to the State Government Building Our Regions Grant Program has been made to fund the construction of a boardwalk and for protection work on the eroded bank. Further negotiations are continuing with respect to this issue but we anticipate it will be finalised in 2019. We are also planning to introduce wi-fi to the Reserve.

Stephen Sheaffe, RHSQ President



Stephen Sheaffe, Denver Beanland, Ruth Kerr, and John Pearn of RHSQ, in 2017.





# The power of the People's Panel

The RHSV Heritage Committee has been participating in discussions regarding the future of the Queen Victoria Market.

At a time when Central Melbourne has been experiencing a building boom with many heritage buildings replaced by apartment towers, the Market has been essentially unchanged for decades and is regarded as a Melbourne icon.

The Market has operated on the current site at the corner of Victoria and Elizabeth Streets since 1878. Early in the 20th century the Market expanded to occupy land of the adjacent cemetery which had been established in 1837. Although many of the bodies were moved to the Melbourne General Cemetery at the time of the market expansion, it is estimated that 6,500 graves dating to before 1854 still remain on the site,

QVM is a traditional open-air

Victorian market from which generations of Melburnians have shopped for fruit and vegetables, delicatessen goods, meat and fish and a variety of general merchandise. Successive waves of immigrants have added to the colour and variety of the site. The Market was added to the National Heritage List in 2018.

In recent years there has been uncertainty about the future of the market and this has led to a number of traders leaving and a lack of attention to maintenance with a resultant shabby appearance.

In 2017 Melbourne City Council presented plans to renovate and modernise the market. The plan was to excavate three levels underground to provide facilities such as cold storage and preparation areas and to radically transform the market's mode of operation. Traders now operate on the traditional market manner: they bring their goods to

their stalls in their vehicles, set up their own stalls and operate out of their vehicles. The plan was to have them bring the goods to loading docks, store them underground, and bring them up via lifts to fixed stalls.

RHSV expressed strong opposition to this plan. The market's traditional mode of operation is part of its attraction and of its cultural value. The various new structures required to access the underground services would fatally compromise the Victorian look of the sheds. The proposal involved mammoth lift wells and various vent shafts and other services, all in a modern sleek Scandinavian design at odds with the look of the market. And five years of disruption required for this massive proposal risk alienating much of the market's customer base, opening the market to the transformation to 'hospitality' (which translates as fast food stalls).

Heritage Victoria rejected Melbourne





City Council's proposal. They found the financial plan unconvincing. They noted that the sheds would have to be dismantled and rebuilt, completely changing them from their Victorian construction. They accepted the RHSV argument that the intrusion of modern structures was unthinkable.

In May this year a new Lord Mayor was elected and she expressed a view that the whole proposal needed to be re-thought. To this end she established a "People's Panel" consisting of 40 individuals representing various stakeholders including the RHSV. Our representatives are the Chair of the Heritage Committee. Professor

Emeritus Charles Sowerwine and Adjunct Professor Judith Smart. They were disappointed with the operation of the Panel. There was an emphasis on what is wrong with the market rather than what is valuable and should be preserved and the solutions to the problems lead back towards the earlier plans rejected by Heritage Victoria. Melbourne City Council continued to maintain that there is a conflict between heritage protection and commercial viability. RHSV and other groups such as Friends of Victoria Market rejected this dichotomy. The RHSV protested to the Lord Mayor and this attracted some publicity ('Historian slams market panel', Herald Sun, 27 October 2018).

A turning point in the process occurred when the full report of Heritage Victoria was released. This report was a devastating indictment of the whole original proposal and changed the views of many undecided Panel members.

The Panel process has now been completed and, due to the hard work of the RHSV representatives and others from various community groups, a set of recommendations has been adopted to be forwarded to the Melbourne City Council. The gist of the recommendations is: to make the Market's heritage value the central factor in future development proposals and avoid excavation below the historic sheds and car park; to reassess the extent of new facilities required (if the market maintains its traditional mode of operation, many of the proposed new facilities won't be needed); and to retain and beautify the existing carpark instead of making it into an 'activity square'

We hope that the recommendations will be accepted by the Council and the future viability of this important community asset will be assured.

Elisabeth Jackson, RHSV Councillor



Queen Victoria Market, 2017.

Source: BobT, Wikimedia Commons.



# Turning up the heat at Woodford

In an Australian-first, the National Trust (NSW) has adapted innovative processes employed in spaces and places overseas to debug the oldest complex of colonial buildings in the Blue Mountains: Woodford Academy. The project has provided inspiration for art, an opportunity for learning in the heritage conservation, architecture, building and museum sectors, and made an already scorching day in February just a bit warmer at the Academy.



WOODFORD  
ACADEMY.  
Source: National  
Trust NSW

Bugs get a bad rap. Many say they're ugly, they elicit shrieks from some, and our relationship with creepy crawlies gets tricky when they start munching on our food, clothes, boring into building structures or getting into irreplaceable historical collections. Insects themselves are often the star feature in many museums around the world and tell stories of the natural history of places.

Woodford Academy is located in the Blue Mountains – a region that is a World Heritage Site. Built originally as an inn in the 1830s, the property has over the years been used as a gentleman's residence, guest house, boarding house and, from 1907–1936 under the ownership of John McManamey, as an exclusive school. The building group is one of the most intact and substantial examples of an early Victorian roadside inn complex in New South Wales. With the curtilage and the survival of substantial building contents from the McManamey period of occupancy, the property represents a unique regional resource for research and interpretation. Woodford Academy was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1979 by John McManamey's sole surviving daughter, Gertrude, and

today it is a museum that offers not only a unique glimpse of colonial life in the Blue Mountains, but a rich program of cultural events.

It's also home to a fair few bugs.

Over the years the buildings and the collections they house have suffered from the work of termites, borers, silverfish and 'the furniture beetle' *Anobium punctatum*. From the 1980s, when the initial restoration works were undertaken, and evidence of extensive termite and borer damage to the fabric of the buildings and susceptible objects was first discovered, there have been continuing issues with the management of insect damage to the structure and the collection. The result has been loss of strength and stability to the floorboards and structural timber of this iconic heritage building.

## So what's new?

Traditional approaches to pest infestations have been piecemeal at Woodford Academy in an effort to contain the problem, with the replacement of affected timbers in localised areas and the treatment of individual objects – but a steady flow of ongoing infestation forced the

issue for the National Trust in New South Wales to take bolder action.

Working closely with a team of experts, and investigating practices used by conservationists throughout the world, the National Trust will be employing conservation techniques that have been applied for various purposes – but never to an entire heritage property in this country.

## How will it happen?

In early February 2019, the innovative practice of using controlled heat was underway. This process has been used to eradicate insect pests in heritage buildings in Europe, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Heat treatments are used routinely in Australia to treat furniture, boats, automobiles, containers, as well as individual rooms and sections of building, but the application of this process to an entire heritage building, or indeed a complex of heritage buildings, has not been previously attempted.

The building complex at Woodford Academy will be progressively heated through a staged process, with groups of rooms or sections of the house heated incrementally until the core of the timber structures



reach the target temperature of 56 degrees Celsius. A range of thermal and humidity monitoring equipment will be used to ensure accurate data is received as the project progresses. The temperature will be held at 56 degrees for a short period with monitoring by strategically placed probes inserted into timber samples matching the dimensions and fabric of the structural components.

The humidity levels will also be monitored and increased in conjunction with the temperature, to mitigate moisture loss from the building fabric or the objects, thus addressing the risk of warping or damage due to excessive drying. Risk assessment has been undertaken to identify specific areas and objects which may be heat sensitive, such as the cartouche (an oval shaped painted wall decoration in the 1855 taproom), the damaged plaster ceilings in the kitchen and washroom, and the varnished or laminated furniture. The cartouche and the plaster ceilings will be protected with insulating panels of foam and plywood sheeting

propped or taped in position. This will cover, insulate and support the building fabric.

It's not all about heating things up. There are two other techniques – one of which is very cool, and once of which is about low oxygen. Heat sensitive objects at Woodford Academy will be treated separately, in a low oxygen tent, for two to three weeks. Utilising another technique where appropriate, collection objects such as books and textiles, can be separately bagged and subjected to low temperatures (minus 18 degrees celsius) for a period of two weeks.

The final stage will be to apply approved chemical treatments to the foundations and floorboards which, where appropriate, will help to keep future pests out. Integrated (nonchemical) pest management measures will be applied to make museum spaces and the collections less hospitable. Physical tactics include sandbags in front of doors, eliminating cardboard boxes, using traps and regular monitoring.

### Sharing the heat

The National Trust (NSW) aims to lead by example; to demonstrate that there is a non-toxic, cost-effective alternative to caring for Australia's heritage places. To that end, the National Trust (NSW) hosted a symposium for museum and gallery specialists, heritage property managers and owners, builders, architects and pest specialists in the conservation sector on 15 February 2019 at Woodford Academy. Guest speakers included pest control experts Alex Roach, Peter Sarkey and Simon de Montemas, as well as the National Trust (NSW) Collections Manager, Rebecca Pinchin, and Dr Clive Lucas – one of Australia's most reputable conservation architects and a Board Director at the National Trust (NSW).

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/woodford-academy/>

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