

BUILT HERITAGE

This submission is being made by me personally and not as a member of any organization.

A major problem with built heritage in Tasmania is that it has no one with newsworthy credentials championing its cause. The members of the Legislative Council are to be congratulated on perceiving this need and attempting to meet it. This is in contrast to the tourism sector, which has the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania to act on its behalf as a lobby group. Built heritage has no such a body. The Tasmanian Heritage Council should have a role in this but it is made up of people approved by the minister, and is serviced by a government sector called Heritage Tasmania. This means it is crippled by bureaucracy, politicised, is under funded and spends much of its time dealing with works applications for listed places. Owners of heritage-listed places have no voice on the THC apart from a requirement under the Act that the Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association nominee should own a listed place. The lack of an over arching built heritage body means that efforts to promote and preserve built heritage are fragmented.

An example of this is this enquiry. I do not know where the names of contact bodies were found but in general conversation in the past week I found two people whose input would be useful for this enquiry who knew nothing about it – one was the Chair of the Allport Library and Museum and the other was an individual tourist operator who specialises in managing tours to fine wine, gourmet food and built heritage places. A third person with positive input would have been our lamented past resident, Leo Schofield, who wrote passionately about the uniqueness of our built heritage. He told me from Sydney that he was not contacted.

Built heritage contributes to tourism through

Family history research.

I have answered many hundreds of queries coming from people researching their ancestry and have amassed files that are now held by the Bothwell Historical Society. A consequence of such family history research is that people wish to come to Tasmania to see the state and view the places associated with their family history. This includes the buildings where they lived – both gaols and houses, the churches in which events occurred and the cemeteries in which their bodies were buried. Such places need preservation.

Aesthetics.

Colonial buildings constructed of sandstone and hand made brick are a rarity in mainland Australia and foreign countries to our north. These buildings are a drawcard for many visitors. There do not appear to be many tours or courses offering access to this wealth of material. One of Tasmania's most successful adult education courses was called "Historic buildings of the northern midlands". It ran for 20 years and drew people from all over Australia to its course, which ran for a week in early January. Many of Australia's older heritage practitioners attended this summer school. Other attendees returned to buy property in the state. The course visited both public buildings and private homes, mostly on farms with owners known to the course director. Allowing strangers to invade their privacy is a continual problem for heritage owners.

Role of local government.

My experience of local government and built heritage is centred on the town of Bothwell. It is a very old community. Many early arrivals into Van Diemen's Land, both convict and free, passed through this town. The Bothwell General Cemetery, established about 1828, is in the centre of town and is one of the most visited places in town (it helps that it is adjacent to the public toilets and the caravan park). The Municipal Council maintains this cemetery despite most of the plots being for people whose families no longer live in the area. One of the biggest problems in its maintenance is the lack of local knowledge about the maintenance of historic cemeteries. Such information is available but does not seem to filter down to the works teams.

In contrast to the Southern Midlands Council, regrettably, no heritage officer is employed by the Central Highlands Council either to educate or to encourage good heritage values and council staff is not trained in heritage values. This has resulted in some rather unfortunate maintenance and planning decisions e.g. modern square guttering on old cottages, plastic downpipes on historic churches and inappropriate infill housing.

Role of state government.

Bothwell is one of the earliest towns in Australia. The adjoining farmland was settled by "men of means" who built substantial houses and outbuildings. Old farm buildings are also a tourist draw card but most are not of great use on a modern farm and are therefore not maintained by cash strapped farmers. There are many fine colonial buildings in the town and local area. Some are heritage listed and others would be if there were enough money to fund the registration process through the Historic Cultural Heritage Act.

Financial encouragement

Unfortunately for the state financial coffers, Tasmania has a disproportionately high number of cultural heritage sites compared with the mainland states. Finance for the Tasmanian Heritage Council is a low priority in the state budget and a programme to assist, financially, the homeowners of heritage properties with their repairs was scrapped about 4 years ago. Any repairs owners make to old buildings using historically correct methods cost more than for unexceptional buildings

Role of tourism organisations. During the many years I sat on the Tasmanian Heritage Council mention was made occasionally of a historic heritage tourism strategy but this never eventuated and if it has since emerged I have not heard about it.

My qualifications.

For 30 years I lived near the historic town of Bothwell and am an active member of the Bothwell Historical Society, conducting tours and answering research queries. I also volunteered a day per week in the Australasian Golf Museum and Visitor Information Centre. I have been an inactive member of the National Trust for 60 years. I am currently a member of the Australian Garden History Society, the Tasmanian Family History Society and the Tasmanian Historical Research Association. I spent 6 years on the Tasmanian Heritage Council (2008-20013) and continue as a member of its Registration Committee and Centenary of Anzac Committee. I grew up in an historic Tasmanian home and have lived for the past 30

years in another. Almost weekly I have shown interested visitors around the house and farm buildings. I therefore have had some experience of tourism and built heritage.

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