



Threads of Conservation

Social fabric • Fabric and place • Conserving fabric

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Sarah Waight has been working part-time over the last five years researching and writing a publication on Hobart's brick heritage for Hobart City Council. Employed by the Council as a Cultural Heritage Officer, she also spends her working days looking at a lot of brick structures in the assessment of planning applications for heritage listed places and in heritage precincts. The opportunity to build a book about bricks and further its wider appreciation has been a great honour.

Sarah has a Masters in Town Planning from the University of Tasmania, specialising in cultural heritage planning and a BSc (Arch) and Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies from the University of Sydney. She has worked for local, State and the Commonwealth and as a heritage consultant on a wide range of heritage, interpretation, planning and environmental projects.

Celebrating Brick – Hobart's brick heritage

Paper Abstract

Hobart is well known as a city of iconic Georgian and Victorian buildings and streetscapes with a sandstone character and charm. Visitors and architectural books feature these important buildings, but the city is more than that. Within months of the arrival of European settlers, convicts were burning clay and lime to produce the first bricks, roof tiles and mortar for makeshift shelters and chimneys.

In fact, brick was the first manufactured building product in Hobart Town. At the Government Brickfields and Limekilns, convict labour sweated over a steady supply of these building materials until their closure. What followed was an era of clamp kilns and makeshift ventures on blocks of land across Hobart all with a fascinating social history. With ready supplies of clay and limestone, enterprising individuals, skilled and available ticket of leave labour, the brickmaking and bricklaying industry evolved into a highly mechanised and efficient industry. At its peak in the 1920s, hundreds of thousands of bricks each week were being produced by Hobart's two brickyards. Some builders and architects utilised this material to its maximum, extolling the virtues and properties of honest brickwork.

Planning and fire regulations required only brick buildings in the 'Brick Area' and as a result Hobart is blessed with streets of brick houses full of character and charm. However, the use and popularity of bricks in buildings and other structures has waxed and waned and today, as in other cities, Hobart faces a growing trend to render, paint and give brick buildings a 'makeover'. This project is to promote a greater understanding and foster a renewed appreciation of those places produced during two hundred years of brickmaking and bricklaying in Hobart. A book will be published, the latest in a growing list of Hobart City Council publications aimed to promote the City's heritage.