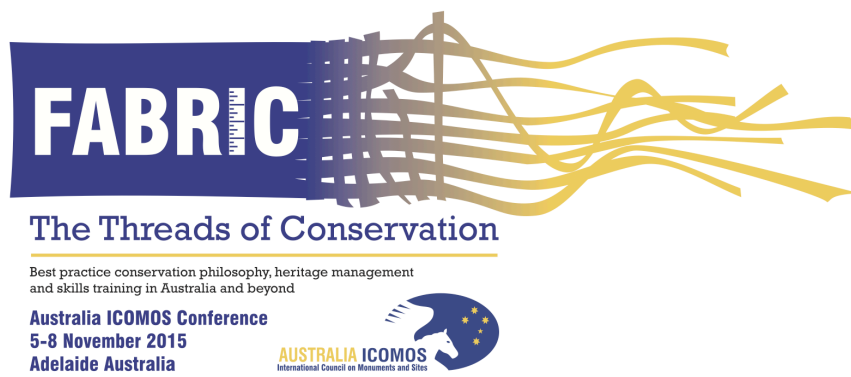


Do Archaeologists Really Care About Protecting The Work They Do – Furthering the Debate

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This paper continues the conservation and preservation versus archaeological excavation discussion initiated in America on LinkedIn earlier this year. Both archaeological excavation and in-situ conservation have benefits; however, this paper encourages consideration of conservation, protection, preservation, archaeological resources and landscape context earlier in Aboriginal cultural resource management projects, to facilitate proactive conservation.

Archaeological resources a component of cultural landscapes that also have meaning through intangible elements. While 'the cultural landscape concept has now become accepted' as more than visual values, intangible values are still often considered secondary to scientific importance (AHC, 2000 in Lennon, p.206). This is possibly due to difficulties inherent in grasping, capturing, appreciating, and communicating intangible values, particularly of another culture. Conservation requires creative thought outside one's own experiences.

The NSW Context

This paper particularly reflects experiences working in NSW consulting archaeology over the last five years, only recently exploring and realising conservation options for Aboriginal stone artefact sites.

In NSW, a defined detailed process for Aboriginal cultural and archaeological heritage assessment has enforced a standard historical progression from survey to test and salvage excavation of sites. An inherent social expectation that development and commercial interest trump conservation issues pressures the destruction of significant Aboriginal archaeology. If the heritage process is followed to the guideline established standards including the paperwork, reports and consultation being in order, there is seemingly no recourse for

preventing an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit being granted, no matter the site's significance.

Some negotiations happen with the Office of Environment and Heritage, the regulatory body, regarding developer's plans to counteract the proposed development impacts. However, more often than not, the 'conservation' solution is to salvage the archaeology, change the landscape and context, and perhaps at the end install inlays or signage to indicate past cultural significance. Is this really getting the best out of archaeology, or simply excavating it to fix but actually shift a perceived problem?

System will not change to support conservation without advocacy and societal care for archaeology. This paper's main premise is that insitu archaeological conservation should be considered and practised more often. Archaeologists can and need to be part of pressuring from the bottom however, they are often caught by pressure from developers, their clients, who are supported by the system. More general awareness and expectation of insitu conservation within the archaeological community will help to broaden pressure to be more responsive to in-situ conservation.

Preservation of landscape context, not just artefacts, is important for effective conservation and communication of a site, place and landscape's values and story. First, an impression of the rich diversity of Aboriginal heritage attributes and values potentially present is provided, followed by an introduction to perspectives on conservation areas, before unpacking why conservation might be overlooked. To conclude, a case study from Oakdale Central will be presented, suggesting how conservation might be better approached in Aboriginal archaeology. It really '...comes down to "dirt archaeologists" active participation in conservation' (Chaz Evans 2015).

What Should We Conserve?

What rich, valuable scientific, social, aesthetic and historical value may be present that archaeologists should account for? Landscape attributes, values and stories that could be considered include cultural practices modifying the environment, creation stories, peopling of place with heroic ancestors, evidence of culture in art, occupation sites, sacred landscapes, overlapping Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories, phases of land use and activities, travel routes and patterns of movement of various groups coinciding, 'being governed by climate, topography and the available natural resources,' knowledge, adaptations and traditions, borrowed or shared ('People and the Landscape' unknown author, n.d., p.1).

There are many heritage stories to tell, as rich and diverse as the personal histories and landscapes of this planet. 'Each and every one of these stories, collective and personal, heralded and unspoken, are what gives meaning to place' ('People and the Landscape' unknown author, n.d., p.1). Archaeology and artefacts alone cannot capture and tell rich and valuable stories about our past in isolation. This is particularly true when links between Aboriginal physical, landscape and intangible values that contribute to spiritual, social and psychological well-being are considered (Turner 2011). Archaeological material culture is one element of a landscape that can enrich cultural understanding and make tangible connections to the past (GML Heritage and Kurna People 2015); but, is its ability to create those connections and tell those stories diminished or lost when detached from its environment? Significant sites with a clear connection to their landscape setting should be the main focus for archaeological conservation.

Protection

With a broader understanding of what might need preservation, that archaeology is inter-related with and can tell a valuable story with its environment, the discussion now turns to

care and protection. First 'protection'. In the context of this debate, the term incorporates preservation and conservation.

The highest archaeological protection may mean insitu conservation (leaving artefacts intact in the ground) and thus the designation of conservation areas. A conservation area has 'particular heritage values ['rooted in the area's history'] which distinguish it from other places...' It is more than 'a collection of individual heritage items. It is an area in which the historical origins¹ and relationships between the various elements create a sense of place that is worth keeping...they show how Australians have responded physically, emotionally, socially and architecturally [technologically and with ingenuity] to the environment... and how places have been variously occupied, used, ignored, refined, degraded...over time' (NSW Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1996b, p.3). This is commonly achieved through retention of physical site elements insitu and intact.

To be classed a heritage conservation area, under the NSW Heritage Act 1977, a precinct must contain one or more heritage items which have conservation-worthy significance and character. The definition includes consideration of all contributory elements to heritage significance, including tangible and intangible aspects. A conservation area requires controls to retain and enhance its important character. Such controls are National Trust advocated and established in Local Environmental Plans for heritage buildings and gardens, but what would happen if this definition was considered for Aboriginal heritage sites and the same principles were applied to Aboriginal archaeology as to heritage buildings? For example, in relation to changes to building fabric, practitioners try to retain what is significant and if prioritisation has to occur, the fabric of highest value based on integrity, condition, authenticity, context and the ability to tell the story of the place, is conserved. Could this approach be more

¹ Note the use of the term history is applied in this paper in the broadest sense of the word and not in a euro-centric way that entails it is only since a civilisation or people could/ did write.

regularly applied in Aboriginal archaeology?

The setting or context of heritage buildings and places are valued for their ability to explain the history and significance of a place. Why is setting not factored in archaeological significance assessments, particularly Aboriginal archaeology? It is time for pragmatic and sympathetic development alongside and around Aboriginal archaeological conservation areas particularly. Archaeology, especially Aboriginal archaeology can be part of conservation areas, reflecting its important but persistently overlooked part in Australian history. Insitu archaeology can communicate how people occupied a place, why and what resources they used in it.

Aboriginal archaeological resources are fast diminishing and perpetual development over sites is causing significant cumulative high impact to the indigenous landscape and its archaeology (Lennon, 2005 p.204). Conservation areas or heritage precincts, especially those including Aboriginal archaeological sites are rare in urban Australia to date. Colonial archaeology is more readily preserved insitu but is still not common.

Conservation areas, especially those including Aboriginal archaeology, should be incorporated into our changing and developing landscape, not as static museum pieces, but allowing for change, growth and diversity in appreciation of places and their values, rather than whole-scale overwriting of Aboriginal history and archaeology by development.

Archaeological conservation and interpretation could provide more meaningful representation, stimulate appreciation of and change perspectives on Aboriginal history and culture.

Why Insitu?

Protecting the past for future generations is essential to intergenerational equity. Insitu archaeological conservation also allows for incremental scientific advances to provide additional and improved information on a site. While insitu conservation leaves something for future generations to uncover, investigate, sample and apply science to, a subsequent benefit is value adding to an area in terms of character, aesthetics, unique stories, sense and appreciation of history and place. Aboriginal archaeology retained in conservation areas such as at Leppington in Southwest Sydney, provides a stimulating place where adults and children can discuss and learn about Aboriginal history and culture. Aboriginal culture in its original context is likely to instill better understand of what Aboriginal life was like pre-colonisation. This is something Aboriginal people have desired for their children since colonisation, but likewise, non-Aboriginal children can benefit from such education. It isn't possible to have a representative sample of Aboriginal sites from which to learn from or apply new science and technology to, if sites no longer exist.

The Status Quo

The status quo in NSW Aboriginal archaeology is following the OEH guidelines which are a minimum standard. The guidelines advocate using landscape assessment to predict where Aboriginal archaeology is, what might be present and its significance. However, assessments particularly tend to, once archaeology is found, focus on the value of the objects and the size, technology, age etc of the site, rather than its significance within and the contributing value of its context, including consideration of Aboriginal world-views. Thus, appropriate mitigation strategies focus on ensuring archaeological information is recorded and artefacts salvaged perhaps losing sight of the Burra Charter principles and to the detriment of other extant heritage values.

Problems inherent in the status quo are somewhat self evident, including lack of meaningful Aboriginal consultation and storage and accessibility to physical heritage. The implications of these problems formed the basis for considerations which shaped the Oakdale Central case study. Consideration of the benefits of conservation may reduce some of these problems through changed perspectives. Thus, important considerations at the commencement of a project should include:

- Does this site require whole scale excavation, will it be capped? Why?
- What is the site's significance, what values need to be conserved, explored, communicated, accessible?
- What is the minimum needed to conserve this significance?
- How will excavation or capping or another proposed measure conserve site significance and values?
- What else could be done to better preserve the site and its values?

A marine biologist discussing increasing development (a similar threat facing cultural heritage) threatening waterways suggested 'we need to spend our lives studying solutions not studying impacts' (Dr Karl Kruzelinski, Science on mornings, Triple J, 20 August 2015). We can do more than simply collecting artefacts, we can also uncover, preserve and communicate the physical archaeological resource and other associative values that contribute to a cultural landscape and its significance.

Being proactive rather than reactive, forward planning rather than post-planning can assist in better conservation rather than better facilitating development expectations and impacts.

Integration of anthropological research with scientific archaeological endeavours (which is currently being trialled in a new Aboriginal archaeology project at West Dapto, NSW) could also contribute meaningful and improved conservation outcomes for all types of values, not

just physical scientific archaeological attributes of a study area landscape.

It was argued in the LinkedIn debate that consulting archaeologists might overlook conservation, particularly in-situ conservation, because they do not care. It might be more likely that we forget archaeological excavation work is inherently destructive. As Chaz Evans (2015) states:

The fact is everyone loves the sites they work on, but don't make the connection that preservation is essential [for keeping its values intact].

Improvements to archaeological practice and conservation of archaeology, particularly in NSW, require thought outside minimum standard guidelines which lead to management of impacts and perhaps use of interpretation to justify destruction. While interpretation can retain some site values, if there are no other values or elements present, the site becomes difficult to list and it is arguable whether the site has its original significance or importance because of interpretation rather than retention of values.

Interpretation is the start of sharing information about a site's values, however, preservation requires more than interpretation at a site (Chaz Evans 2015). Heritage sites cannot be saved and conserved without consultant's effort to communicate site's stories, history and values to the community and alongside the community, lobby, protect and gain supporters for conservation.

Unfortunately, the lack of movement on conservation may be due to the status quo mentality that development is more important than sustainability or conservation. Thus heritage is perceived as a problem interfering with development, and so the inevitable results are archaeological salvage excavation. As this is the norm, perhaps we sink into malaise, which is

might be seen with excavation after excavation seemingly being undertaken to rescue artefacts with often the same research questions being used across excavations.

Proactive Archaeological and Cultural Landscape Conservation – A Case Study

The Oakdale Central project for Goodman properties attempted to overcome many aforementioned problems and address wider social issues through effective communication and management of values. The project responded to Goodman's 2013 proposal for installing large cement pads for truck terminal sheds on green-fields land at Horsley Park, Western Sydney. Goodman considered sustainability and offsetting of the development's environmental impacts. Conversations on flora and fauna bio banking triggered consideration of cultural heritage banking as a proactive measure to conserve some high value Aboriginal heritage assets within the study area.

During field surveys few or no surface Aboriginal artefacts were identified. A landscape assessment approach facilitated predictions on subsurface Aboriginal archaeological potential. Discussions undertaken with the local Aboriginal community on site identified that flats near the creeks were possible camping places, while hill and slope areas were remembered as places to hunt (Des Dyer pers. comm. 2013). Test excavation was suggested and endorsed by the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) in undisturbed areas, with transects of 50cm² test pits concentrated along the creek and some transects across the hillslope landform.

Test excavation confirmed the presence of Aboriginal archaeological deposits and determined that while some artefacts were on the slopes, high density stone artefact concentrations (SAC) were along the flats adjacent to the creek. The extent of these SACs was defined with excavation of additional test pits for better spatial conservation planning.

The Oakdale Central test excavation findings facilitated artefact density mapping, illustrating where SACs or discreet sites were and where they were not. Following this, GML and the RAPs worked with the client to alter planned features of the development, including a sewer and storm water retention pond, to avoid impacts to the archaeological sites of highest significance. These site areas were determined based on location in the landscape, relationship to other SACs, integrity and likely intactness, high artefact density and presence of other potential cultural features. The alterations to planned development impacts at Oakdale Central avoided the most sensitive archaeological areas, designating them as conservation areas which represented a good outcome for the RAPs, intergenerational equity and heritage.

This was not without problems. The client and client's staff required convincing to realise the heritage, community, social and financial (in terms of reduced salvage excavation costs) benefit of the proposed conservation. While the client's project manager was easily convinced after growing up with Aboriginal people and gaining a rich understanding of their culture and heritage, it was difficult to convince the company that interpretation, not just conservation, of the highly significant archaeology would enrich the lives of truck drivers who would work in the area. The question frequently posed was why would truckies care? It is hoped that interpretation of this area might challenge and change pre-conceived ideas of Aboriginal people, their culture and technology.

The intention now is that the conserved Aboriginal archaeological sites would not only be passively interpreted by retention in the landscape, but that the sites' Aboriginal history would be communicated to the public. The conservation area has not limited the client achieving commercial aims, but has provided a valued addition to the development in the provision of an open space with cultural values. The space is a place where staff can retreat for lunch and inter-state/ long-haul truckies can catch up with their families.

There is always a balancing act between development, the environment and heritage, but heritage practitioners should advocate their cause. Conserving and not salvaging part of a site does provide benefits to development and developers socially, financially and by providing character and uniqueness to place. The client realised these benefits and has an outcome they are proud of. Goodman didn't have to compromise or sacrifice in terms of the development needs, but altered and moved features to fit within the Aboriginal archaeological landscape. The alternative would have required the expense of whole-scale salvage, loss of archaeology in the landscape and diminution or over-writing of the Aboriginal cultural values of that landscape.

Since the project, a subsequent problem has been lack of funds to install interpretive tools for the conservation areas. While these are recognised as valuable by the client, archaeology and heritage management was not factored into the project at the beginning. With some excavation required, funding has now temporarily run out for the installation of conceived natural interpretive and functional infrastructure sympathetically blended into the landscape. But, who should pay for interpretation and is it fair or realistic to expect developers to pay for it? One benefit that may be realised by developers is the potential value-adding to a development in terms of sense of place, which is an option for further exploration. Conservation which includes interpretation, is an outcome to be strived for.

Interpretation/ Communication/ Access/ Advocacy

Interpretation whether through active engagement or passive experiences, is essential in conservation to inform people about significance and values. Interpretation is the public explanation or discussion of a cultural heritage site, encompassing its full significance, multiple meanings and values. Interpretation should have an educative value but information should be selected, engaging, enhance appreciation and understanding of the site, not replace the site or be there for information sake.

With a trucking industry audience and an opportunity to communicate values and perhaps change perceptions, some of the interpretive ideas for the Oakdale Central conservation areas included walking paths, picnic tables and barbecues stations. Each of these features would, through artistic and informative inclusions, tell of the Aboriginal ovens, stone artefacts and site arrangement found at Oakdale Central. The cultural landscape space is accessible to the public and staff and such infrastructure would facilitate practical enjoyment of the space as well as communication of the heritage values of the place. The involvement of Aboriginal people in excavation and the designation of public ally accessible conservation areas has facilitated reconnection to their ancestry, activities in the recent past and beyond living memory. In addition, it has provided the Aboriginal community a place to come and tell their rich archaeological and cultural heritage stories to younger generations.

The project has inadvertently tackled issues of access and reconnection which is particularly important in places such as the Sydney Basin where vast volumes of story, tradition and memory has been lost due to the affects of colonisation, inappropriate governance and political schemes. Insitu conservation has made the cultural heritage values of Oakdale Central more accessible to the public than a post-excavation report stored in the government repositories for access by specialists and other interested parties who are aware of its existence. People, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can visit Oakdale Central, experience the landscape and hopefully soon the archaeology for themselves. One gets more from being in a place, than from seeing pieces of a place exhibited in a museum, out of context. Insitu conservation is a powerful interpretive tool particularly for non-heritage specialists. If objects and photos from Oakdale Central were in a museum, you wouldn't necessarily understand why people camped there and what they might have done there, whereas it becomes quite clear when in the landscape, and powerful when one thinks of what could be beneath our feet.

Something preserved in its landscape also helps to preserve some of the landscape and thus future generations might be able to experience the place, its values and undertake better scientific research on it. If a building or dam had been placed over the archaeology at Oakdale Central, people would never particularly appreciate the footprints of Aboriginal people on the land before settlers in this area.

'We can't save all of them, but we can't save any of them if we don't know that they are out there.' (Chaz Evans). People cannot advocate for conservation of a place or convey its values if they do not know about them. Heritage values cannot be effectively communicated without investigation and if they have been diminished or destroyed; ie there are no artefacts or values left or the remnants from a site are devoid of meaning due to dislocation from the landscape.

The interpretation cycle captures the great outcomes interpretation has for conservation: by understanding a place and its story, by valuing that place and/or story, people care for it and enjoy it. The cycle can work the other way too – by enjoying a space and its attributes or story, people are more inclined to care for it and value it, and they convey the story or meaning of the place for them, to other people.

Key Positive Learning

The Oakdale Central project is not the first time insitu conservation of Aboriginal archaeology has been undertaken, as alluded to with the Leppington example; however it is very uncommon, particularly in NSW for stone artefact sites. A big responsibility and reliance is placed on archaeologists and anthropologists 'to define and communicate cultural heritage significance and ... values' (Thompson 2015).

Conservation should be based on significance. Representative samples such as highly significant sites, sites where an engineering solution can be found and where the public or a

suitable audience can access should be conserved insitu. Archaeologists need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of insitu retention and alternatives including when and where interpretation is important. But the significance and value of a site in connection to the landscape and area's history should be the guide, resulting in appropriate management and communication of cultural heritage places.

Insitu conservation will not be suitable or work to conserve values in every circumstance. Archaeologists should consider when insitu conservation will work at the project planning and consultation stages involving both the client and RAPs. While finances have run out, a better than normal conservation outcome was achieved at Oakdale Central with the designation and retention of a conservation area that includes Aboriginal archaeology. This was guided by a whole of landscape assessment approach which was essential to identifying, assessing, understanding, communicating and conserving the site's values and components within wider environmental, biogeographic, historic and social settings. Industry professionals working with archaeology should ideally keep a landscape perspective throughout a project to facilitate the telling of the story and significance of a site/place in context.

- 'Management of heritage places with shared histories across different phases of human land use and between different communities will [and should] ensure that:
 - all aspects of the history of a place are identified, recorded and assessed;
 - both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural values are acknowledged at places where they co-exist;
 - management of the remaining physical evidence of one historical theme or story is not at the expense ... of another; and
- visitor interpretation covers all aspects of the layered histories [including archaeology] of such places' (Lennon, p.213).

Finally, designating conservation areas within heritage management reports is a first step but is insufficient if the conservation area is not publicly known. If a site is important enough to designate for conservation, it is important enough to list on relevant Local, State, or Commonwealth heritage registers, assisting to ensure conservation.

This paper might state the obvious or preach to converted, particularly in conservation circles; however, its intent is to share a new combination of ideas that might stimulate new approaches, built upon long accepted heritage conservation principles. The next challenge is disseminating, advocating and sharing this message to ensure its application in archaeology and consulting spheres.

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