

# Making tracks on the Mornington Peninsula

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The Australian landscape is 'marked and scarred by historical and continuing contestations of competing "rights", by ancient song lines and Aboriginal practices of land ownership and by waves of migration that have inscribed upon it intricate patterns of occupation'.<sup>1</sup>

The township of Blairgowrie, on the Mornington Peninsula, in Victoria, Australia, is no more than a village; the strip of shops, of no particular historical significance, a convenience and a meeting place for the community. But Blairgowrie is also a peaceful and naturally protected beach haven, on Port Philip Bay, lying on one of the narrowest parts of the southern end of the Mornington Peninsula. Here, one can still imagine the indigenous peoples<sup>2</sup>; the arrival of the first European settlers, their hardships, their isolation, their decision to abandon the site because of lack of fresh water. It is also possible to see what they saw almost two centuries ago: an inviting bay with undulating hills covered in open vegetation in the near distance.<sup>3</sup> From bay to ocean side is barely three kilometres. The contrast is remarkable. St Johns Wood Road crosses the Peninsula at this point and takes you from the warm, quiet, lapping waters of the bay to the colder, crashing, surf rollers of the back beach. Bridgewater Bay, inaccessible at high tide, reveals extensive rock platforms, near shore reefs and deep rock pools at low tide - a paradise for swimmers, snorkelers, divers and jumpers, and those with a curiosity to see and explore the hidden treasures thus briefly revealed. The views from the tops of the sand dunes and the Pleistocene dune limestone cliffs encompass much of the Mornington Peninsula National Park, from Cape Shank to Point Nepean; across the ocean from Queenscliff to Cape Otway; and across the land, bayside, from Arthur's Seat, Mount Martha, Mount Eliza, to the city of Melbourne, Mount Dandenong and Mount Macedon in the distance.

Over three decades my husband and I have grown to love this landscape, to understand its language, to be comfortable with its rhythms, to respect the tumultuous forces of nature, and to appreciate its gentler side. Our daughters learnt to explore, to see, to touch, to taste, to smell, and to hear this landscape from babyhood. Now they treasure the knowledge of that gift. Over the years, as we have come to know the fragility of this environment, we have witnessed major development of the southern part of the Peninsula, particularly in the housing sector, and to a lesser extent in the commercial area. Here the relationship between routes and the natural environment and the impacts on the natural environment are clearly visible. Today only 5% of the natural vegetation still remains on the Mornington Peninsula, much of it in the National Parks. Weed infestations are rampant, and the indigenous vegetation struggles to survive.<sup>4</sup> Inappropriate development and over-development alarmingly continue to threaten this fragile environment. In the seventies, Calder recognised 'an awakening to landscape values and their importance to the human spirit', and warned that 'it is time we took stock in case our material affluence is blinding us to spiritual poverty'.<sup>5</sup> In 1989, Forster noted that 'For too long our society has been satisfied with repairing damage to our environment', and that 'growing urbanisation is now threatening many of the environmental values that attracted people to move to the area'.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Peninsula seems to be in the grip of another boom, and the problems articulated in the seventies and eighties need ever more urgent measures to address them. Groups such as the Nepean Conservation Group Inc. (formerly Sorrento-Portsea-Blairgowrie Conservation Group Inc.) do not have the finances or resources to cope with the demands being placed on them.<sup>7</sup> Further, it is of major

concern to all thinking residents that local issues and decisions made by local government are frequently overridden by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.<sup>8</sup>

Sand dunes, which constitute the underlying fabric of the tip of the Peninsula are notoriously fragile and unstable.<sup>9</sup> Tourism, while economically sound, has had devastating impacts on the southern Mornington Peninsula landscape. Respect for the particular landscape is nowhere in sight when it's a race to the surf or the rock pool; and when all too few think to take the remains of the picnic home. Signs such as 'Keep out. Revegetation', 'Dune Restabilisation in Progress' or 'Danger unstable cliffs', act like a magnet and seem to signal a definite short cut to too many visitors. They scramble over or under fences, destabilise the dunes, dislodge rocks, trample the vegetation, and endanger lives. Bottles thoughtlessly left behind are smashed by the incoming high tide: broken glass, sand and bare feet do not mix well. Nonetheless it is here in this fragile and unstable environment that the appreciation and understanding of land and culture is still possible, through the experiences of following routes on foot or in a vehicle: reading the tracks, learning the signs, discovering the layers of meaning, the richness of detail.

I would like to use the opportunity afforded by this conference to examine the meaning of this place in greater depth, through images, perceptions, and representations; through time; history, topography; flora and fauna; through finding a way of coming to terms with this extraordinary land/seascape. Perhaps, like Anne Whiston Spirn, I am trying to come 'to understand the whole through many significant details'.<sup>10</sup> Norberg-Schulz argues that 'to protect and conserve the *genius loci* in fact means to concretize its essence in ever new historical contexts'.<sup>11</sup> In order to be able to identify and continually refine and redefine the spirit of a place, a place must be experienced as meaningful. Today, too many people's experiences of their environment are fragmentary and fleeting.<sup>12</sup> A place, a landscape, does not give up its secrets in a hurry. As Spirn notes from her own experiences 'To read landscape deeply requires local knowledge'.<sup>13</sup>

Italo Calvino in his *Invisible Cities* writes:

You walk for days among trees and among stones. Rarely does the eye light on a thing, and then only when it has recognized that thing as the sign of another thing: a print in the sand indicates the tiger's passage; a marsh announces a vein of water; the hibiscus flower, the end of winter. All the rest is silent and interchangeable; trees and stones are only what they are.<sup>14</sup>

A friend stayed at our 'Blue House' in Blairgowrie, in autumn. She saw only the drab greyness of the vegetation: coastal tea tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), drooping she-oak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) coastal banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*), moonahs (*Melaleuca lanceolata*), white correa (*Correa alba*), salt bush (*Atriplex cinerea*), coast daisy bush (*Ozothamnus turbinatus*), cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*). She did not see that all are well equipped to survive in the local conditions: lime rich sandy soils, and salt spray. To brighten up the back yard, and to mark the season more clearly, she left us a gift of a manchurian pear tree (*Pyrus ussuriensis*) - a handsome small tree that has a rounded shape, and glossy leaves that take on brilliant autumn tones as the weather cools, one of the last of the deciduous trees to drop its leaves. It now struggles to live. I will move it in winter to a place where it can flourish, away from the lime and salt.

Calvino continues

However the city [place] may really be, beneath this thick coating of signs, whatever it may contain or conceal, you leave Tamara [Blairgowrie] without having discovered it. Outside, the land stretches, empty, to the horizon; the sky opens, with speeding clouds. In the shape that chance and wind give the clouds, you are already intent on recognising figures: a sailing ship, a hand, and an elephant.  
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If we are to avoid future generations becoming mere sightseers, tourists with no respect for the place, or visitors who 'leave ... without having discovered it' a holistic management approach must be adopted on the Peninsula. It must begin with a real understanding of the meaning of place, of landscape as a continuous whole, avoiding the professionals' fragmentation of seeing, of understanding, of telling only bits of the story. Many different groups are working on the Peninsula, many with similar objectives of preserving, retaining or enhancing something of the Peninsula but they are clearly separate entities. They include the Nepean Historical Society, the Nepean Conservation Group, Parks Victoria, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, and the Nepean Ratepayers Group. Local knowledge needs to be respected and embraced. Humans in the twenty-first century need to relearn, rediscover and reclaim the signs, the paths and languages long forgotten. For beyond marking and scarring, the making of tracks, the process of history, time and memory has made this place sacred. Tracks initially gave humans access to the landscape; many of these same tracks still have the potential to give us access to the landscape today.

A peninsula is almost an island, and thus a most distinctive natural place. Anne Spirn allows us to appreciate the concept of landscape generally, though it is only in experiencing a particular landscape personally and deeply that her observations become meaningful. She writes:

Landscape is pragmatic, poetic, rhetorical, polemical. Landscape is scene of life, cultivated construction, carrier of meaning. ... significance does not depend on human perception or imagination alone. Significance is there to be discovered, inherent and ascribed, shaped by what senses perceive, what instinct and experience read as significant, what minds know. ... Landscape is not mere scenery.<sup>16</sup>

Spirn argues powerfully that:

The language of landscape prompts us to perceive and shape the landscape *whole*. Reading and speaking it fluently is a way to recognize the dialogues ongoing in a place, to appreciate other speakers' stories, to distinguish enduring dialogues from ephemeral ones and to join the conversation. The language of landscape reminds us that nothing stays the same, that catastrophic shifts and cumulative changes shape the present. It permits us to experience pasts we cannot otherwise experience, to anticipate the possible, to envision, choose, and shape the future.<sup>17</sup>

The Mornington Peninsula, and the small area designated as Blairgowrie, is a landscape where multiple readings abound. The three alternative walking tracks from Bridgewater Bay to Spray Point demonstrate this clearly. The inland track is a mostly sandy woodland path, meandering alternatively through stands of moonah and tea tree. It provides shelter and

coolness away from the hot summer sun; protection from gale force winds in all seasons; and is surprisingly warm in winter. It is a still, magical place. It reveals its layers of meanings tentatively, inviting one to linger, listen, look, and to be present with all ones senses. Yet only if you make yourself 'invisible' will you see the birds. The superb blue wren, flits across the path; his family in close proximity. Last year's young help raise this year's brood. He is unafraid and feeds, barely touching down, flitting from shrub to shrub. The seasons' changes are subtle, the spring surprises an endless delight, the toll of a summer drought heartbreaking. The Mornington Peninsula National Park, together with the smaller Arthurs Seat State Park, contains the most important areas of native vegetation remaining on the Peninsula.

The walk along the cliff tops over coastal sand dunes offers spectacular views of the ocean and extensive coastline; of significant geological and geomorphological features: the cliffed calcarenite coast with platforms, stacks and arches. Depending on weather conditions, long lazy rollers with enormous manes pick up rainbows, or crash so heavily, that their spray shoots meters into the air. Surfers wait expectantly for the right wave. Landside one encounters picturesque areas of coastal dune scrub, large undulating sand dunes, and barren rocky outcrops. The coast or prickly spear-grass (*Stipa stipoides*), a tussock forming plant with deep binding roots, valiantly resists the fierce weather. Other plants, such as the prostrate coast everlasting (*Helichrysum paraliium*) keep pace with sand drift. Any tea tree, moonah or box that grows here, hugs the ground, creating massive gnarled forms of trunks and branches; the evenly 'pruned' foliage is so well kept in check by the wind and salt spray, that many a visitor has believed that someone trims it regularly! Here the freshest air in the world hits you in the face, having travelled thousands of kilometres across the ocean from Antarctica. The smell of salt tingles your nostrils, the salt spray sticks to your body, dampens your hair, and clouds your vision if you happen to wear glasses. The long rollers are magnificent, the breakers thunder in, the waves reaching the base of the cliffs at high tide. Early in the morning you can walk alone, with only the tracks of the jacky lizards and blue tongues to keep you company. Occasionally a shy echidna will allow you to watch as he snuffles in the sand among the roots in search of food. One learns to read the signs of other presences, to read the footprints in the sand. Dolphins surf the waves and southern right whales break the surface out to sea. In the evenings the sky often puts on a spectacular display. Clouds, layers and layers of greys and whites with a little blue in between; the rays of the sun low; reflections in pools. I can understand why the painter John Constable loved his clouds so much, their effects, their constant changes, their differing moods. I can appreciate that he loved his small corner of England, as I love this small area of Victoria. The changes are constant, delightful, truly time to wonder at nature.

The third path is only traversable at low tide. It takes you onto the rock platforms themselves and here another world is revealed. Flora and fauna are abundant. The vegetation consists of exposed sea weed, Neptune's pearls and the giant kelp feature predominantly, other varieties abound in the rock pools. The white faced grey heron feeds. Tiny fish, sea anemones, star fish, and molluscs inhabit the inter tidal zone. New sensations abound: sand between your toes, sharp rocks to toughen your feet, sea weed to squelch under thongs. But nothing beats the sheer pleasure of swimming in the deep still rock pools, full to the brim, when you are at the same level as the base of the enormous rollers, yet protected by the rock shelf. As the tide turns you enjoy natural spas, it's like swimming in champagne when you've just popped the cork! Shells to collect. A flock of gulls lift off as you get too close. Caves to explore, a sleepy seal to disturb, arches to clamber through, new perspectives revealed. Waterfalls delight after a surge of water recedes. Rock stacks form distinguished persons, mythological creatures - grotesques, bunyips, hares. If you stand quite still, you can watch the rare hooded plovers feed and run across the sand. Evening reflects in pools.

The paths reveal human presence over eons, what Spirn calls 'Dynamic weaving, fabric of stories.'<sup>18</sup> Aboriginal kitchen middens along the cliff tops have been exposed over time by wind and salt erosion. The broken shells and bones and stones are the remains of numerous feasts and banquets by Aboriginal people thousands of years ago.<sup>19</sup> Evidence of numerous middens have enabled researchers to document routes used by the Bunurong people. Route 1 begins from Melbourne and follows the coast around the Mornington Peninsula along Port Phillip Bay, round Point Nepean, along Bass Strait, up Western Port Bay to The Inlets, opposite French Island. Route 2 does a loop around the Peninsula cutting inland at Sandy Pt.<sup>20</sup> It is awe-inspiring to know that the route along the cliff tops at Blairgowrie overlooking Bass Strait has been traversed by humans for at least 6000 years. Sullivan documents 32 sites on the cliff top walk between Bridgewater Bay and Spray Point alone.<sup>21</sup> Not only was this area a wonderful source of food, but it provided the most scenic backdrop for a shared communal meal. Here in this transitional coastal zone, humans have always been able to get in touch with the spirits of the land and sea. I do not claim to understand the land as the Bunurong did, nor do I have their intimate knowledge of it, for I do not live off the land. But it has become part of my very being. Here in this place my soul can sing.

While middens have been documented at the Sisters and Sullivan Cove,<sup>22</sup> little if any physical evidence remains of the first European settlement in Victoria, near Sorrento on the Nepean Peninsula. This settlement lasted briefly from October 1803 to May 1804, when it was removed to Tasmania.<sup>23</sup> 'Extensive settlement was not begun until after the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, when its proximity and easy access to Melbourne by boat made it a prime area for grazing leases and for acquiring many resources needed in the new settlement.'<sup>24</sup> During the late 1830s and 1840s lime-burning became a thriving industry on the Nepean Peninsula. Large dips and hollows in the woodlands or tea tree scrub document the activities of lime burners, for here limestone was quarried to be taken to local kilns.<sup>25</sup> By 1845 records indicate that some 17 kilns were burning lime in the area and 20 limecraft were taking lime to Melbourne and returning with much needed supplies.<sup>26</sup> To support this industry, as well as grazing, agriculture and timber supplies for Melbourne, much of the vegetation, predominantly she-oaks and banksias, was cleared. Tea tree grew in its place and changed the pattern of the landscape.

Evidence of the leisure activities of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century middle classes who frequented the southern Mornington Peninsula is also to be found. The *Federated Australian* reported in 1900 that 'The Back Beach is never without its crowd of ladies and children drinking in the healthful breezes of the place'.<sup>27</sup> Sorrento was the destination, when Blairgowrie was known as Sorrento West. In the 1870s well-known Melbourne citizens were attracted to the area as an escape from the tensions of life in the city. The most enterprising character was George Selth Coppin. His story is told elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> But his vision was for a bustling seaside resort, accessible by paddle steamers, capable of carrying hundreds and eventually thousands of people. As well, several medical men publicly extolled the health giving properties of this area, themselves acquiring properties along the ocean beach. They have left accounts of idyllic, carefree, isolated holidays along the very beautiful ocean beach. Blairgowrie was named for the square, towered, limestone residence on the dominant hill of the area: the house was a local landmark long before the township as such developed. 'The building was erected by the Hon. Michael O'Grady in 1874, and named "Villa Maria". ... On the death of O'Grady "Villa Maria" was bought, in 1877, by Dr John Blair, one of the leading medical men in Melbourne at the time, and renamed "Blairgowrie" '.<sup>29</sup> Here the concept of the villa in the landscape is given full expression. Built of local materials, the villa commands both aspect and prospect. The site chosen for its 360-degree views so positioned the house

that it responded to those characteristics that made the Nepean Peninsula unique – the contrasts between ocean and bay, between densely vegetated land and open sea. Four main facades exploit the elevated site, reminding one of Palladio's explanation for his design for the Villa Rotonda, in Vicenza, three centuries earlier: 'Thus , because [the villa] enjoys beautiful views on every side, some of which are limited, others more distant, and still others that reach the horizon, loggias have been made on all four sides.'<sup>30</sup>

While a stone villa may remain as one of the more permanent reminders of settlement, only remnants of the tram tracks of the Sorrento Tramway, the roughly hewn limestone paths that became the extensive life saving tracks, and early structures are still visible. Other journeys are now only recorded in the local newspaper *The Leader*. In 1892 the headline read, *Speeding Trams*. 'It is high time that some steps were taken to make the steam trams run along the road to the back beach at a more reasonable rate of speed than they normally do. We understand that the terms of their agreement is ten miles an hour, a sufficiently high rate of speed along a public thoroughfare, where there is often a number of people promenading.'<sup>31</sup> The start of the 1907 season was also dutifully recorded by *The Leader*: 'There was great excitement last Saturday, and the pier crowded to receive the Hygeia, on her first trip of the season. She brought a fair number of passengers, and received three lusty cheers as she approached the pier. A great number of people came to the Hygeia on Cup Day as it was a beautiful day, they all seemed to enjoy their visit to the full. Most of them patronised the trams and went to see the picturesque spots on the beach.'<sup>32</sup> A glimpse of 'The Great Ocean! Strongest of creation's sons, unconquerable, unreposed, untired, that roll'd the wild, profound, eternal bass in nature's anthems,' would have reminded others of the unforgiving nature of the sea and the wreck of sailing ships like the Sierra Nevada in May 1900.<sup>33</sup>

Iron rings embedded in the rock platforms near the Sphinx testify to unsuccessful attempts made at taming the ocean and harnessing the tidal energy for electricity. Only at the lowest of low tides is Graham's Reef at Koreen Point accessible. Here the ruins of an aquarium and grotto built in the late 1920s remain, reminders of another time, someone else's vision. Three memorial plaques are embedded in the rocks at Koreen Point. Stories waiting to be told. The 'Blue House' was built in Dandenong in the 1940s, cut in half and trucked down to the Peninsula. The old timer's memories become part of our story and Spirn reminds us that 'Memories are sensual, personal, place-specific'.<sup>34</sup>

There is a fourth path along the foreshore reserve, bayside. The journey's purpose may be the same, to find the meaning of place/landscape, but the destination differs. This path runs roughly parallel to the other three, but here there is overwhelming stillness compared to the ruggedness and wildness of the ocean. Boats bob in clusters in the shallow waters, where one is struck by the many colours of sails. Birds, people, dogs, children, and bathing boxes populate the foreshore. One is left with the impression of grasses, coastal banksia, butterflies. Clouds are dynamic players in the sky vault. Here in the continually changing atmospheric conditions 'light becomes a live and strongly poetic element'.<sup>35</sup> At Blairgowrie, the landscape character becomes manifest 'as a silhouette against the sky, sometimes gently undulating', as on the bayside, 'sometimes serrate and wild' as on the ocean side.<sup>36</sup> The contrast with the ocean side is important. The relationship of one to the other, provides a context for understanding the whole. Today's pleasures of walking uninterrupted in the shallows or along the shore, swimming in the warm salt waters or just sitting, relaxing away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, are enriched by the knowledge of history stretching over eons, and by memories and experiences I would like to bequeath to future generations. Beyond marking and scarring, the process of history, time and memory makes this place sacred.

The evocative and poetic qualities of Blairgowrie do not reveal themselves immediately. Only over a period of time, and by visiting at various times of the day in all seasons, can one begin to fathom its moods, its soul, its many colours; and to touch its memories. Here beauty is something to be discovered and revealed, not invented and imposed. Sullivan tells us that 'the drowning of Port Phillip Bay was remembered in Aboriginal oral tradition'. Mr W Hull, JP, in 1858, gave the following account in to the Select Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council on the Aboriginals:

Blacks say that 'their uncle' (unspecific for all progenitors) recalled when Hobsons Bay was a kangaroo ground. They say 'plenty catch kangaroo, and plenty catch possum there' and Murray (an Aboriginal) assured me that the passage up the Bay, through which the ships came is the River Yarra, and that the River once went out at the heads, but that the sea broke in, and that Hobsons Bay, wick was once hunting ground, became what it is.<sup>37</sup>

Part of the unique quality of this landscape stems from the fact that there are still no large intrusions into the bay. Thus sea and sky can meet or divide, totally unobstructed, depending on climatic conditions, seasonal weather patterns and diurnal changes. It is still possible here to get a sense of scale, of wide angle limitless vision, for here the open space reveals a vast sky. Barcan and Buchanan observe that:

One thing is clear to scholars who work in contemporary Australian Cultural Studies: space isn't an emptiness, a void to be filled, the neutral scene for action. Rather, space is imagined - called into being - by individuals and the cultures of which they are a part.<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the 'impulse to see the pragmatic and poetic as separate, or even contradictory' is troubling.<sup>39</sup> Spirn argues that 'ironically, the professionals who specialize, reading certain parts of the landscape more deeply than other parts and shaping them more powerfully, often fail to understand landscape as a continuous whole'. She notes further that 'Once those who transformed landscapes were generalists: naturalist, humanist, artist, engineer, even priest, all combined. Now pieces of landscape are shaped by those whose narrowness of knowledge, experience, values, and concerns leads them to read and tell only fragments of the story.'<sup>40</sup> Norberg-Schulz argues that: 'Such a loss implies pure quantification, and is thus linked with the modern scientific attitude.'<sup>41</sup> It also reflects the values of our materialistic consumeristic society. If something does not have a quantifiable dollar value, it is not esteemed. Thus trees in a rain forest, pristine beaches, open spaces are undervalued and treated as resources to be exploited. The character of a place is equally difficult to quantify and value in monetary terms.

Norberg-Schulz suggests that 'thing, order, character, light and time are the basic categories of concrete natural understanding'.<sup>42</sup> I have explored some of these in attempting to define the spirit of the natural place at Blairgowrie, for here landscape determines meanings and relationships. Norberg-Schulz argues that man 'is a thing among things', 'he lives with the cosmic order'. ... Humans 'cannot be friends with scientific "data", but only with qualities'. 'Man also lives with "light" and is tuned by light.' ... 'Man lives in "time" ... He lives with the rhythms of day and night, with the seasons and in history'.<sup>43</sup> Any development impacts upon the broader understanding of landscape, and alters our relationship with landscape.<sup>44</sup> The organisers of the Pacific Peoples' Partnership Networking Conference, titled 'Indigenous

Wisdom: Stewardship of Culture, Environment and Resources' remind us that 'There is a saying that the decisions we make today will effect [sic] the next seven generations'.<sup>45</sup>

Norberg-Schulz concludes that 'the meanings which are gathered by a place constitute its *genius loci*'.<sup>46</sup> 'How can the *genius loci* be preserved under the pressure of new functional demands?'<sup>47</sup> History points to constancy and change. If the *genius loci* is not respected, 'the place loses its identity'.<sup>48</sup> This does not mean that change cannot be introduced. We should be able to talk about a 'living tradition which makes change meaningful by relating it to a set of locally founded parameters.' Norberg-Schulz suggests a process of 'creative participation'.<sup>49</sup> Helen Armstrong, in her paper 'Inventing landscape: new collaborative design', talks about 'The revalorising of localism and local communities ... emerging in all fields', noting that it 'has emerged particularly strongly in the understanding of landscape - landscape as myth, landscape as environment, landscape as place, landscape as cultural identity'.<sup>50</sup> Yet still, one is mindful of Elizabeth Meyer's question 'Why is landscape visible, but never heard?'<sup>51</sup> Spirn argues that in decision making 'there is imbalance between local knowledge and expert's overview, between passionate provincialism of local residents and the indifference or ignorance of distant owners or bureaucrats'.<sup>52</sup> Only now is a character study of the Mornington Peninsula, and specific places like Blairgowrie, being undertaken by volunteer community groups.<sup>53</sup>

Seddon states that 'The first step in design is recognition, the ability to see what is there. Only then can we ask whether a given structure is appropriate to its setting, or whether a proposed land-use is appropriate in a given environment'.<sup>54</sup> Only then can we ask, does the development/use contribute to the place/landscape? Does it enhance the place/landscape? Once development or use designation has occurred it is too late to consider such questions. It is my contention, that in our planning processes the inclusion of the 'qualitative nature of places' should be mandatory.<sup>55</sup> Landscape is after all 'a perceptual term, not an objective reality'.<sup>56</sup> Seddon suggests that we learn the geology; respect the landform, the soil, the hydrology, the natural vegetation, and the cultural landscape; and celebrate the context and the *genius loci*.<sup>57</sup> It is the tracks that give us access to this complex weaving of texts that together constitute the landscape. But it is in the forming of Friends Groups of Bushland Reserves and National Parks on the Mornington Peninsula that a solid knowledge base is being established. At the small E G Ritchie Memorial Flora Reserve the first task was to reinstate the perimeter track, followed by plant identification, eradication of environmental weeds, planting and mulching in its vicinity. Mapping this bushland reserve is to be undertaken this year. An education program is high on the agenda: learning to look, observe, identify, appreciate, respect. Not just the friends, but the neighbours are being informed and given suggestions as to how they can help in conserving the character of this place.<sup>58</sup> As Tuan observes, the visitor 'has a viewpoint', while the native (or local) 'has a complex attitude derived from his immersion in the totality of his environment'.<sup>59</sup> You cannot know the landscape as it flashes past at 100 kilometres per hour. Once you leave the bitumen and turn into a dirt road you need to alter your driving habits and be open to new experiences. Today people have no innate code of conduct once they step out of the car into the car park in a National Park. They need to be educated, to alter behavioural habits and to observe the signs. More importantly they need to learn to identify what it is they see. All of this takes time. Norberg-Schulz concludes his book, *Genius Loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture*, by stating that 'Only when understanding our place, [may we] be able to participate creatively and contribute to its history'.<sup>60</sup>

## References



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Edquist in Edquist and Bird 1994, 11.

<sup>2</sup> It was here that the Aboriginal people watched the arrival of the first European settlers in 1803. The Aboriginal population on the Mornington Peninsula dwindled rapidly after European settlement began in the late 1830s.

<sup>33</sup> 'An expanse of water bounded in many places by the horizon, and as unruffled as the bosom of unpolluted innocence, presented itself to the charmed eye, which roamed over it in silent admiration' - with these reflective words J. H. Tuckey, First Lieutenant of His Majesty's man-of-war *Culcutta*, recalled his feelings as he gazed for the first time on the southern waters of Port Phillip Bay on a warm spring day in early October 1803. Quoted from Edgar French in *Environment Effects ... Report 1999*, 5. Elsewhere, in the same year, Lieut. Tuckey wrote: 'The face of the country is beautifully picturesque swelling into gentle elevations of the brightest verdure ... covered by a profusion of flowers.' Source: Nepean Historical Society archives, Sorrento.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Winty Calder's study of 1975. Much of the material is still relevant a quarter of a century later.

<sup>5</sup> Calder 1975, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Forster 1989, foreword and introduction respectively.

<sup>7</sup> In many instances volunteers are doing the work that should be undertaken by Shire Council or Parks Victoria contracts. In a two-month period over 200 planning applications were made to the Shire. The NCG could only deal effectively with 30 of these. Too few people and resources are spread too broadly and too thinly.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to the the Nepean Conservation Group Inc. *Newsletter*, which comes out quarterly, and to the Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 24 February 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to the map 'Sorrento geological survey No 867 zone 7', in Keble 1968.

<sup>10</sup> Spirn 1998, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984 [1979], 18.

<sup>12</sup> Tourism has much to answer for: for example the *Kontiki* tours that promise to show you Europe in 21 days; or the bus tours that show Japanese tourists Victoria in day.

<sup>13</sup> Spirn 1998, 4. Refer also to Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, quoted in Spirn 1998, 13, and to Shakespeare, in *Antony and Cleopatra*: 'In nature's infinite book of secrecy, a little I can read'.

<sup>14</sup> Calvino 1997 [1972], 13.

<sup>15</sup> Calvino 1997 [1972], 14 [replace city with 'place' and Tamara with Blairgowrie]

<sup>16</sup> Spirn 1998, 15, 18, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Spirn 1998, 25 - 26.

<sup>18</sup> Spirn 1998, 133. See also her Chapter 5, 'Shaping Landscape Context'

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Sullivan 1981. This work indicates 'that there were a large number of middens along the Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait coastlines and that they were being rapidly destroyed by natural erosion and urban and recreational development', Introduction.

<sup>20</sup> Sullivan 1981, 120, Figure 3, Routes of movement and site locations mentioned in the ethno-historical literature.

<sup>21</sup> Sullivan, 1981, 123, Figure 7, Map of Nepean Peninsula Sites: Blairgowrie Back Beach, 23 sites 2/219-241, Koonya Beach, 9 sites, 2/082-8, 3/089-90.

<sup>22</sup> Sullivan 198, 123, Figure 7, Map of Nepean Peninsula Sites: Blairgowrie and The Sisters, and Plates 12 and 123, photos of the badly eroding stratified sites at The Sisters on the Port Philip Bay coast.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to publications by the Nepean Historical Society, especially Bridges, Collins and McCraw 1992, 20ff. Remnants of the perforated casks sunk in the sand to collect fresh water for drinking are on display at the Sorrento Historical Museum, Old Mechanics Institute, Sorrento.

<sup>24</sup> Sullivan 1981, 12.

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- <sup>25</sup> After the discovery of dune limestone on the southern end of the Mornington Peninsula in the 1840s, a thriving industry was established to supply the fast growing town of Melbourne, expanding rapidly as a result of the gold rushes in the 1850s.
- <sup>26</sup> Bridges, Collins and McCraw 1992, 41-42.
- <sup>27</sup> *Federated Australian*, No. 2, 1900
- <sup>28</sup> For example, refer to Winzenried, 1994 [1984].
- <sup>29</sup> This information was compiled from documents held in the archives of the Nepean Historical Society (NHS) at the Museum, Melbourne Road, Sorrento. Refer specifically to the brochure 'Blairgowrie: Village by the Bay', July 1997. Refer also to Andrea Inglis' delightful and scholarly book *Beside the Seaside* (1999).
- <sup>30</sup> Palladio quoted in Ackerman 1990, 106. The Villa Rotonda was built between 1566 and 1570, for Monsignor Paolo Almerico.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Leader*, 17 March 1892, NHS archives. Reprint from the Mornington Peninsula Leader, a limited edition reproduction from the pioneers' newspaper.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Leader*, 9 November 1907, NHS archives. Reprint from the Mornington Peninsula Leader.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Leader*, 1900, and 12 May 1900 respectively, NHS archives. Reprint from the Mornington Peninsula Leader.
- <sup>34</sup> Spirn 1998, 98.
- <sup>35</sup> Norberg-Schulz (1984), 40; see also Spirn, 'clouds' p. 142
- <sup>36</sup> Norberg-Schulz (1984), 40.
- <sup>37</sup> Sullivan 1981, 4. Sullivan quotes Hull, W., 1858, Evidence in 'Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, 1858-59', in Victorian Legislative Council, *Votes and Proceedings*, Government Printer, p. 12.
- <sup>38</sup> Barcan and Buchanan 1999, introduction, p. 8.
- <sup>39</sup> Spirn 1998, 3.
- <sup>40</sup> Spirn 1998, 23.
- <sup>41</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 1984, 24. Norberg-Schulz also touches on the notion of a place being 'a poetical fact', p. 170. See also Yi-Fu Tuan's introduction to *Topophilia* (1974). On p. 61, Tuan argues that 'Truth is not given through any objective consideration of the evidence. Truth is subjectively embraced as part of one's total experience and outlook'.
- <sup>42</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 32. He continues, that 'whereas thing and order are spatial, character and light refer to the general atmosphere of the place. ... Time, finally, is the dimension of constancy and change.' Things include earth and sky, topography, mountain, vegetation, water which together make a place sacred. Order refers to the cosmic order, character to the meaning of the place. Light is the most general and the least constant, and thus related to time. Time picks up the seasons and temporal changes, pp. 24 – 32.
- <sup>43</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 168.
- <sup>44</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 169: 'Man is part of a living world, and does not conceive meanings in a vacuum. Meanings necessarily form a part of a totality, which comprises natural components. Everything created by man is in the world, it is between earth and sky, and has to make this state of affairs manifest'.
- <sup>45</sup> The Pacific Peoples' Partnership, 16th annual Pacific Networking Conference held in B. C. Canada, 5- 7 May 2000.
- <sup>46</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 170.
- <sup>47</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 180.
- <sup>48</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 182.
- <sup>49</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 182.
- <sup>50</sup> Helen Armstrong, 'Inventing landscape: new collaborative design', in Edquist and Bird 1994, 118.
- <sup>51</sup> E K Meyer, 'Landscape architecture as modern other and postmodern ground', in Edquist and Bird 1994, 16.
- <sup>52</sup> Spirn 1998, 35
- <sup>53</sup> This study is a MPSC initiative, and commenced in late 2000.
- <sup>54</sup> Seddon 1997, 112.
- <sup>55</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 192.
- <sup>56</sup> Seddon 1997, 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Seddon 1997, chapter 12, pp. 113 – 118.
- <sup>58</sup> The Friends of the E G Ritchie Memorial Flora Reserve were formally constituted in June 2000. Ursula de Jong and Pru Ervin are the joint co-ordinators of the Friends Group. It has been established with the support of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and are under the umbrella of the Nepean

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Conservation Group Inc. The plan is to ensure the survival of the E G Ritchie Memorial Flora Reserve as a bushland reserve.

<sup>59</sup> Tuan 1974, 63, see also the discussion that follows.

<sup>60</sup> Norberg-Schulz 1984, 202. Norberg-Schulz's text loses much in the translation from German to English. Ross Gibson in his paper 'Enchanted Country' asks 'What does it mean to know a stretch of country in the twentieth century, in a nation formed out of the second wave of European military imperialism?' He replies: 'For European - Australians like myself, it means working with, around and against a heritage of "psychological mapping" which causes experience to be ruled off into subjective and objective realms of sovereignty and challenge; it means being governed by the Cartesian compulsion to maintain one's sense of self by way of actions applied to a world of objects. However, living in this country also means being exposed to alternative philosophies and landcultures ... And once the Western subject begins to suspect that their heritage is somewhat dysfunctional the process of knowing a stretch of country begins to entail experimentation with adapted modes of being in the world of matter and meaning.' Gibson in Edquist and Bird 1994, 85-86.