Sophie Brettell

Sophie Brettell has worked as a heritage consultant in New South Wales for 15 years. She has professional interests and technical specialisations in archival recording, historic comparative mapping, heritage interpretation and archaeological management of historic cemeteries. Her work with Archaeological and Heritage Management Solutions (AHMS) has included projects ranging from built heritage conservation and planning, interpretation of heritage sites, archival recording of European heritage, assessing the significance of built, cultural and social environments including cultural landscapes, and the management of archaeological sites under threat. She has been involved with the archaeological management of the Camperdown Memorial Rest Park (formerly Camperdown Cemetery) since 2003.

Understanding and managing the significance and intangible heritage values embedded in the site of a former cemetery

Paper Abstract

This paper forms a discussion of the intricate interplay between archival resources and the physical / archaeological remnants associated with the former Camperdown Cemetery in Sydney. The site was operated as a private Anglican Cemetery between 1848 and 1868. It was closed following a Select Committee Inquiry, convened to address the mismanagement of a number of cemeteries in the Sydney region. The Cemetery was converted into a Rest Park in the 1950s, with a central portion of the site retained as the churchyard for St Stephen's Church now enclosed by a high sandstone wall.

The significance embedded within this site is layered, and draws on tangible, semi-tangible and intangible heritage values. The challenges of managing and conserving the cemetery remains while maintaining public amenity are ongoing, with archaeological monitoring programs informing and expanding our understanding of the development of the cemetery and, later, the Rest Park. The installation of the sandstone churchyard wall that now encloses a large number of standing monuments has led to a disconnection between the extant visible cemetery and the remnant cemetery archaeological resource.

Future management of this site aims to bridge this disconnection through comparative mapping of the archival and physical resources in an ARC GIS format, and exploration of potential interpretive devices and strategies that engages a broader audience, including park users, with the history of the site.