

## 'To know the place for the first time': Consideration of Diverse Values for an Australian World Heritage Site.

*Isabel McBryde*

*Isabel McBryde, member of Australia ICOMOS, is Professor of Archaeology in the Faculties, Australian National University, Canberra. Her research and teaching fields are in prehistoric archaeology, with special interests in Australia. In the 1970s she excavated in the Willandra Lakes Region, investigating Pleistocene sites on the lunette of Lake Arumpo. She has been actively involved in conservation issues, as a Commissioner of the Australian Heritage Commission, on Advisory Committees concerned with Aboriginal sites for the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. In 1992 she took part in the Expert Meeting on Cultural Landscapes at La Petite Pierre.*

*In 'To know the Place for the First Time': Consideration of diverse values for an Australian World Heritage Site", Professor McBryde relates the Aboriginal culture and its spiritual relationship with the land to the concept of Cultural Landscapes (recently taken up by ICOMOS and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention) and the relationship between human societies and the natural environment. The author examines the three Australian World Heritage Sites which were inscribed for their important cultural values as well as their natural values: Kakadu National Park in the northern monsoonal belt; the Willandra Lakes Area in the arid lands of western New South Wales; and the Tasmanian Wilderness Area in the rain forest and Alpine uplands of south-western Tasmania.*

Australia is an island continent the size of North America. Given its extent, its geology and topography within its latitudinal position, it offers landscapes of great diversity. They range from the monsoonal scarps and wetlands of Arnhem Land, through the east coast's sub-tropical and temperate rain forests to the once glaciated uplands of Tasmania. These well watered regions surround a desert core of sandridges and chenopod shrublands, edged by extensive grassland and savanna woodlands. Thus much of the continent is sparsely occupied and many settlements isolated even today. The 'tyranny of distance' is still a vital factor in Australian human geography.

The cultural record of this island continent is comparably diverse and spans some 50,000 years at least. Before the colonial settlement from Britain in 1788 all areas of the continent had been occupied over long periods by hunter-gatherer societies, those of the recent past characterised by an intense spiritual relationship to the land. This spiritual relationship with 'country' was, and still is, essential to the life of each society. It is maintained and celebrated in the passing on of the stories about Dreamtime ancestral beings who created the land and established the rules of human life within it. It is sustained also by holding ceremonies. Maintaining the landscape of group territories and places

within it was a traditional duty enjoined by the Dreamtime beings. Thus the group territory was often a 'managed' landscape, with use of fire as the tool. It was an important social obligation to care for the resources of the landscape. These were both economic, such as stone quarries, important trees or yam fields, as well as social and spiritual such as the Dreaming sites and ceremonial grounds.

The nature of the land, its environments and their resources, and its great distances, have shaped the personality of its history, of hunter gatherer, colonial and post-colonial societies. The 'tyranny of distance' has been a valuable interpretive concept in historical studies since it was first proposed by Geoffrey Blainey decades ago (1966).

The question of cultural landscapes therefore assumes importance. The theme has recently become of considerable interest to several academic disciplines as well as to ICOMOS and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The relationships between human societies and the natural environment are seen as major questions in Australian archaeology (both prehistoric and historic) as well as for anthropologists and for human geographers. The research of archaeologists and anthropologists has created awareness that many seemingly natural landscapes are in fact the results of careful long-term management by hunter-gatherer



Fig. 1. Looking along the eroded lunette of Lake Mungo in the Willandra system and across the dry lake bed to the part of the dune known as the Walls of China. Erosion has revealed the structure of the lunette, its various units giving a record of

changing hydrological climatic conditions over the last 150,000 years. The cremation burial of the Mungo woman was located near the large residual in the centre. Photograph: by Isabel McBryde

societies.

Australia has nine listed World Heritage Areas. Three of these are listed formally for their important cultural values as well as their natural values. These are:

- Kakadu National Park  
(In Arnhem Land — in the northern monsoonal belt)
- The Willandra Lakes Area  
(In the arid lands of western New South Wales)
- The Tasmanian Wilderness Area  
(The rainforest and alpine uplands of south western Tasmania)

To these we should add *Uluru* (Ayers Rock and the Olgas in Central Australia). Listed for its natural values it holds important cultural values in the ongoing traditional life of local Aboriginal communities. The question of its cultural significance in relation to a re-nomination in terms of these values is at present being addressed.

Some general points may be made about these four places. First, all four places are cultural landscapes or incorporate cultural landscapes of the past though they were not nominated as such.

Three were nominated as presenting both cultural and natural values worthy of World Heritage status. They also displayed significant interaction between the natural environment and human society, in the past and the present. This interaction may be economic, but also religious and symbolic. It is significant that for both Kakadu and Uluru it

forms an integral part of continuing cultural tradition. A second point is that all these Australian World Heritage sites involve extensive tracts of land; for example both Kakadu and the Tasmanian Wilderness Area cover over a million hectares.

A third point to emphasize is the significance of Aboriginal culture in the cultural record highlighted in the nominations. Three of these areas were inscribed for their ancient archaeological or Aboriginal cultural record -- especially its scientific value for our knowledge of the prehistoric past (Willandra Lakes and Tasmania). A cultural record exemplifying Aboriginal achievement in ongoing cultural traditions was stressed for the rock art of Kakadu. The nominations for these places laid particular stress on the scientific values, and their contribution to world prehistory or knowledge of the natural environment (for example geomorphic processes as at the Willandra Lakes). However we should never forget that cultural continuity is an important aspect for both Kakadu and *Uluru*. It is significant also that these two places are located on Aboriginal land, and as National Parks are managed in a partnership between the Aboriginal communities and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (A Commonwealth agency, previously the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Australia's World Heritage sites also provide some national icons. This is particularly so of *Uluru*, usually under its European name, Ayers Rock. 'The Rock' is seen as symbol of the quintessential desert core of our country and its outback heritage. Many use it to convey this meaning.

Brochures for the 1993 International Conference on Accelerator Mass Spectrometry featured Ayers Rock, wetlands at sunset and Sydney's Opera House reflected in blue harbour water. In Australia, intending participants were told,

*Ancient red landscapes co-exist with spirited young cities on blue ocean harbours.... this vast land renders you silent — listen to the resounding stillness of Ayers Rock.*

Here the image is read as text with a message of 'wilderness', the remote unpeopled desert contrasted with the throbbing pulse of the cosmopolitan harbour city.

This reading comes easily, Yet the magnificent icon has other names and other meanings. If we call the rock *Uluru* we re-contextualise it as a place of major significance to the Aboriginal people of that part of Central Australia, its values rooted in the spiritual affinities between people and land in Aboriginal culture. Yet these values held by 'the Rock' may be totally unknown to the potential customers who easily read the intended symbolism of the advertisements in the media. Few could share those other values, or perceive the many-layered meanings encapsulated in the image.

So questions arise about significance, the values held by places we regard as 'heritage', and how these values may be sustained in heritage management. Further, we must ask how can we recognize and accommodate a diversity of cultural values held by one place for different groups within our society with its roots in many cultures?

In a multi-cultural or pluralist society such as ours the concept of 'Shared Heritage' has appeal, as acknowledging both the plurality and the distinctiveness of the traditions from which places derive their significance. It is a complex perspective and an inspiring ideal. But is it achievable? Is it little more than an 'impossible dream'. Should it indeed be seen as achievable? Hence my reference to lyrics from the *Man of La Mancha* - the idealist dreamer of impossible dreams. It reflects my concern that if the values held by places are embedded in discrete cultural traditions, it may not be possible for them to be effectively shared. On the one hand there may be elements that for powerful cultural reasons cannot be shared, on the other the question of loss in any resulting amalgam of disparate values. Will it always be a matter of differing value systems, and (in times of 'hard' management decisions), the exclusive allocation of priority to one or the other? Accommodating these disparate values derived from different cultural bases may provide challenging dilemmas as in the case of the old Swan Brewery site near Mt. Eliza, Perth. This site holds vital values in two cultures; its future was debated over a long period. (See Domicelj and Marshall 1994, Egloff 1989, Stapleton 1992 and Vinnicombe 1992).

There will be situations where values deeply rooted in the specifics of certain cultural traditions may not be sharable. So perhaps what we should be sharing or exploring is the cross-cultural understanding of the power of these values, sharing respect for this and a willingness to accommodate it in assessing and managing heritage places. This raises the vision of an integrated Australian approach

to heritage, accepting diversity of values, understanding each perspective in its distinct context, and its role in the wider scene. In many ways this problem has analogies with the various levels of meaning and significance which must be considered in approaching World Heritage listing and the management of those sites of 'outstanding universal significance' which itself may be multilayered, and require balancing the 'global' against the 'local'.

An exploration of the existence and power of multi-layered values may provide the first and perhaps major route to new approaches, not only in assessing heritage significance but to managing places sympathetically and creatively for Australians of differing cultural backgrounds. We may not yet in Australia have a 'shared culture', if this denotes a melding of all those disparate cultural traditions in our society into a new entity. Indeed many would argue against such a creation. So heritage managers have to meet the challenge of managing a multi-faceted heritage, and sustaining its various values.

Sharon Sullivan, Executive Director of the Australian Heritage Commission, has argued that management is only effective if it is rooted in the values of the culture whose heritage is being managed. This viewpoint is also implicit in the Guidelines to the Burra Charter (See discussion by Domicelj in Domicelj and Marshall 1994 pp21-23). Given the range of values involved, Sullivan's statement that 'conservation policy must evolve from the society whose heritage it seeks to preserve' (*Heritage News* 14 (2) 1991) itself implies new complexity. This is especially so if the wider society, or its dominant legislating majority, is not itself rooted in the traditions whose material manifestations it claims and seeks to preserve as heritage. If managers ignore this advice alienation results from the apparent discounting or disempowering of the views of the present holders of those traditions. Further privileging one set of values carries the threat of appropriation or of 'cultural imperialism' as both Byrne (1991) and Sullivan (1993) have argued in powerful papers.

In 1992 Badger Bates addressed a meeting of Australia ICOMOS. An Aboriginal staff member of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, he spoke of Mootwingee (Mutawintji), a site in his own country and famous for its painted and engraved rock art sites.

*To us, the history and spirituality of a place is more important than the art itself. If the art is destroyed by natural processes, this does not destroy the importance of the place to us, only to white people. We feel it is more important to protect the surrounding landscape and associated sites than to preserve the art by ugly gridding etc. This is why we find it so sad that there is no shortage of funds for white people to painstakingly record the art or date it, but where is the money to record what our old people know about Mootwingee?*

The search for culturally appropriate management is a challenge for Australian heritage professionals. It is one, which like 'the impossible dream' offers rich rewards. Is there also perhaps, as with the *Man of La Mancha's* dream, an ethical dimension? Certainly ethical obligation enjoins

not only respect for the values identified as significant by the inheritors of those different cultural traditions, but also commitment to involving those inheritors in management and in establishing the policy that guides it.

In such contexts sharing may seem an elusive entity. What are we sharing — knowledge? or belief systems? or the values that underpin them? In these domains, if we are serious about cross-cultural understanding, we must be ready to accept situations in which 'sharing' is neither culturally appropriate nor possible. Situations may arise involving information which is restricted, or situations in which, for culturally important reasons, information loss must be accepted. At times the values can be asserted but their specifics not imparted for there are none among the arbiters qualified to receive such knowledge. Those of you concerned with management of Aboriginal sites could cite many situations in which the impossibility of sharing restricted knowledge has been misunderstood by those of differing cultural traditions (Creamer 1989 pp. 134-135). Maori scholar Jonathan Mané-Wheoki reminded an Australia



Fig. 2. Erosion reveals a midden of fresh water mussels (*Unionid* sp). Witness to the collection and processing of these shellfish at a time of lake-full c. 20,000 years ago on Lake Garnpung. Photograph by Isable McBryde, 1997.

ICOMOS meeting that:

*By definition a sacred site is one whose significance is only fully apprehended by a community steeped in its own system of mystical or metaphysical belief. (Historic Environment 9 (1 and 2): p. 35).*

He also discussed situations in which significant traditional stories could not be passed on; there were no longer any living descendants with the right to transmit them. In other cases the loss of physical heritage must be accepted where conservation is counter to traditional mores. So he expressed concern at the preservation in the National Museum of New Zealand of the oldest surviving carved house, *Te Hau-ki-Turanga*, built in the 1840s, the decade of

the Treaty of Waitangi. By Maori values this sacred object should have returned 'to the elements'. It was 'desacralised'/decontextualised by the intervention of the conservation policies of what from this perspective was an introduced 'museum culture'.

Other problems arise if we confuse a commonality of concern with sharing of values or of knowledge. Commonality of concern need not lead to shared perspectives, or to integrated interpretation. Indeed there may be interpretation from one perspective alone, even appropriation or transformation of values (conscious or unconscious). These ideas may be explored further in a consideration of the values held by Lake Mungo National Park, in one of Australia's first listed World Heritage Sites, the Willandra Lakes region in western New South Wales.

Lake Mungo is a place with many meanings, attracting much community of concern from various interest groups. It is part of the Willandra Lakes system which arches across the map north of Balranald in NSW, a string of massive dry lake basins which last held water over 15000 years ago. The Pleistocene deposits of the Lake Mungo lunette, known as the Walls of China, contributed new dimensions to Australian prehistory following Bowler's discovery there in 1968 of the Mungo female cremation burial dated to c. 26000 years ago. The Lake Mungo lunette has since then become a powerful icon to Aboriginal communities, to archaeologists and earth scientists or geomorphologists, to local land holders, tourist operators and local government as well as to the artistic community. Its formations hold the key to so much of our landscape and climatic history and the human history evolving within it. For an interesting survey of 'interest groups' and their involvement in Mungo National Park see Gostin's essay *Accessing the Dreaming* (1993).

In recent decades, Aboriginal culture has been enthusiastically espoused by non-Aboriginal Australians. This has been especially so in the artistic arena from the 1950s. Yet in this we can often detect an appropriation, a promulgation of a vision of the cultural heritage of Australia's first people as symbol of Australian national identity that excludes the present life and culture of their descendants.

*.... while many people have accepted Aboriginal material culture as part of the nation's heritage, didgeridoo and boomerangs, they still have a long way to go before accepting the people. (Creamer 1986 p. 7)*

This movement in art certainly ignores the continuing traditions and concerns of Aboriginal people in present Australian society. The implications of this for heritage managers have been explored in recent research by Denis Byrne and we look forward to its publication (Byrne 1993). The more general contexts in Australian intellectual life were considered by contributors to Attwood and Arnold *Power, knowledge and Aborigines* (1992).

The arid landscape of Lake Mungo National Park with the spectacular dunes of the lunettes edging the long-dry basins of the Pleistocene lakes is typical of those which inspired Australian landscape painters of the 1950's —

Drysdale, Arthur Boyd and later Nolan. Drysdale was important in shaping a changed perception of Australian landscape. His vision was not

*.... the Golden Summers of his Impressionist predecessors — but red dust, drought, desolate townships and their few indomitable inhabitants. (Jennie Boddington 1987 p. 9)*

We see this powerful vision vibrant in his 1945 painting of the Walls of China. Here the landscape, as Bernard Smith puts it, appears 'alien to man, harsh, weird, spacious and vacant.... fit only for heroes and clowns, saints, exiles, and primitive men' (quoted in Boddington 1987 p. 14). So the Aborigines entered Drysdale's world. Yet, as he himself commented, they were people of another cultural world:

*those days.... wild brown stone-age people roamed this country which was their own. (Drysdale 1962 quoted in Boddington 1987 p. 49)*

Drysdale expresses an artistic vision of Aborigines, and of their culture and its place in the Australian landscape, which gained prominence in the 1950s. It is still powerful in our artistic and literary world. In this vision the Aborigines and their culture act as symbols powerful aids for non-Aboriginal Australians to exploring their own personal and national identity. Here again the danger of appropriation as icon emerges (See Byrne 1991, Attwood & Arnold 1992 and Marcus 1998). It is a vision accommodating neither the vibrant living continuity of Aboriginal culture, nor the lives of Aboriginal communities within the landscape. The only reality is the symbolic. Lake Mungo has acquired important values in this artistic vision of Australian landscape and identity. Sydney Nolan spoke of the vital role visits to the area played in his personal artistic and spiritual journeys (Brown 1989).

In a sense Nolan, as reported in 1989, had appropriated Mungo as his very personal place, for to journey there was a 'homecoming'.

*I had the feeling it was right that we come here. You see, I feel I belong here, and while I'm here I'm happy. (Brown 1989 p. 11)*

Heather Brown who accompanied Nolan on this 'journey and homecoming to paradise' reported that Lake Mungo was 'unmistakably Australian, unmistakably Sir Sydney Nolan' (1989)

Not only painters but also potters, photographers and poets seek inspiration in the sculpted landscape of the dunes and in the vestigial presence of ancient Aboriginal culture. To them such visits constitute a spiritual experience, almost a pilgrimage; but is it one situated in their own cultural values and traditions? Do they listen for those other 'voices'? The voices that tell of the meanings Mungo has held, and those it still holds?

*For me it is the negative image of Ayers Rock. Ayers Rock sticks up and is there for all to see. In this area the landscape is more subtle. One has to be immersed in the landscape. It has a mystical air. In a sense it is the kink of site that is sacred to everyone. (McGrath 1984).*

Another visitor, the travel writer for the *Canberra Times* (February 21, 1993 p. 23) also senses the mystery there, but derives it from the archaeological vision of ancient life-ways. The ancient hunter, the writer notes,

*... pervades one's senses when exploring the Lake Mungo National Park.... a journey of 40,000 years and now back where we had begun we realised that what we had encountered was another way of seeing things a new perspective of time. (Canberra Times 21/2/1993 p. 23)*

These words, reminiscent of the sentiment in Eliot's 'Little Gidding' (one of the Four Quartets) focused an image of the ancient hunter, frozen in time, his spear poised. They derived from the writer's fascination with the archaeology of Mungo, yet are still dominated by the stereotype of the desert hunter in spite of the archaeological significance of the female cremation burial known as 'Mungo Lady'.

To archaeologists also Lake Mungo is a place of pilgrimage. It has produced an important archaeology from the range of sites stratified in the dune's Pleistocene deposits.



*Fig. 3. Excavations on the early 1970s directed by Wilfred Shawcross of the Australian National University explored the archaeology of the Mungo unit in the Mungo lunette. Its lower levels were dated to c. 38,000 years ago. Photograph courtesy of ANU University Public Relations.*

With the succeeding Holocene record this offers vital evidence on changing human use of this spectacular geomorphological landscape over at least 40,000 years. The earliest dates for these sites hover at the very limits of radio carbon dating techniques with promise of extended chronologies from the application of thermoluminescence dating (TL). The 40,000 year dates from sites investigated in the early 1970s opened up new areas of Pleistocene archaeology for excavation. The international significance of this archaeology was rapidly recognized. As a result the Willandra Lakes Region became one of Australia's earliest nominations for World Heritage listing as a record of cultural and landscape history of 'outstanding universal value' The

region offers unparalleled opportunities for investigations of human cultural history and landscape formation.

To Aboriginal people, both local and Australia-wide, Mungo's archaeology has been of paramount significance. In the 1970s it documented the deep antiquity of Aboriginal occupancy of the Australian continent. This provided important statements at a time of political shifts and changing perceptions of Aboriginal collective self awareness. The archaeological sites of the Mungo Lunette could be seen as symbols of Aboriginal cultural continuity and survival. In this case there was an incorporation of archaeological knowledge into Aboriginal perceptions of their own identity and cultural traditions (See Creamer 1988 p. 58).

To local Aboriginal people Lake Mungo's archaeological record carries further meanings. The female cremation burial, 'Mungo Lady', is important as symbol as well as a person from the distant past. 'We owe her so much' Badger Bates said to me in 1992 (pers. comm.). To Badger Bates and other members of the local communities of Western New South Wales, Lake Mungo and its archaeology have both particular as well as general significance. This has been articulated clearly over the last eighteen years, not least in the roles taken by local leaders such as Alice Kelly and Mary Pappin from Balranald, Lottie Williams and Roddy Smith from Dareton and Wentworth, William Bates and Alice Bugmy from Wilcannia. They present local Aboriginal views to the scientific community and heritage managers and advise on the significance of sites in the local landscape. Questions of custodianship and control of sites, also of their investigation by archaeologists, were raised as early as the mid 1970s by the Balranald community.

Aboriginal people of the region's local and Regional Land Council have been active in the last decade as members of management committees set up by government agencies, thus asserting their role as custodians of past heritage. They value Mungo and its sites. It is a 'magical place', 'sacred ground', to quote some comments from local elders recorded in interviews televised in 1993 (SBS Programme 'Spirit to Spirit' 28-10-93). While acknowledging the importance of the archaeologists' contribution they still regard the area as of special significance to Aboriginal people and insist that they have a major role in decision-making regarding heritage sites. They look to a future in which research is conducted by Aboriginal archaeologists.

To the local non-Aboriginal community Lake Mungo also holds important values. There is pride in the recognition of its archaeological significance, nationally and internationally. However there is also concern over the implications of the involvement of heritage management, especially since World Heritage listings. Will this become intrusive? Such concern can be exacerbated by a sense of loss of control over what had always been seen as directly controllable, one's own property and its management. There was also the perception of intrusion by different levels of government into what had previously been the domain of local government: local rural affairs and enterprises such as tourism.

The groups most directly affected have been the land

holders of the World Heritage Area who found themselves simultaneously and suddenly engaged with heritage management at both the local and international level. What impact will World Heritage listing have on their running of their properties? Many had already shown an intense and long-standing concern for the protection of historic and Aboriginal sites on their properties, for example the Barnes families on Joulni and Mungo stations, or Angas Waugh whose valuable collection of Aboriginal artefacts is now curated in the Research Centre at Lake Mungo National Park. Meeting the concerns of Willandra land holders will be an important task for those finalising the management provisions for this World Heritage Area. Further land holder involvement in conservation policy will be an essential element in its success.

So Lake Mungo has acquired levels of meaning and special values for many Australians. It is unquestionably a place of power. Much of its symbolic value is rooted in current debates on collective self-identity, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Many non-Aboriginal visitors have more concern with visions of a pristine Aboriginal past belonging to distant millennia than with the local Aboriginal culture of the present. Opportunities for acquiring other perspectives could be developed but are often allowed to slip away.

However for archaeologists and Aboriginal people some significant initiatives have been taken. In 1989, a workshop on research was held at Lake Mungo National Park. Its aim was an overview of past studies in the environmental and cultural fields of research. Participants included the scientific investigators, local Aboriginal people, heritage managers and local land holders. It was a sharing and exploration of research results, of information, and a recognition of the genuine interest each group held in the landscapes of the Willandra. The researchers there made an open statement of their commitment to Aboriginal custodianship of the past and its physical remains, including the human remains. Aboriginal participants responded warmly. In January 1992 the cremated bones of the 'Mungo Lady' were returned from the laboratories of the Australian National University to the keeping of the elders of the local communities at a solemn and moving ceremony held on the lunette near the original find spot. This occasion was one of genuine sharing of experience and perspectives. It brought together researchers, Aboriginal people and local land holders to celebrate a new beginning. The return of these bones in an important sense was a realisation of 'the impossible dream' in its exploration of new possibilities of shared understanding.

On this special occasion the archaeologists (committed to the conservation ethic, and to the scientific values of their discipline), acknowledged the important values held for others by those fragile bones, accepting the symbolism of their return to Aboriginal control. Aboriginal people on their part openly recognised the value of archaeological research and its contribution to knowledge of their past. With the elders when they received the finds, was Mr. Barnes of Joulni, holder of the land on which the find was made. This occasion was the more significant given the unfortunate and irreconcilable clash of values between



*Fig. 4. Excavations in 1975 directed by the writer investigated deeply buried midden sites in the deposits of the Lake Arumpo lunette dating to c. 36,000 years ago. They were revealed by deep gully erosion of the fragile dune landscape. The shell*

*horizons document the gathering and processing of fresh water mussels from the now dry Lake Arumpo. Photograph by Isabel McBryde.*

archaeologists and the Aboriginal community over the Know Swamp human remains in 1990.

Other changes in the public legislative domain reflect new attitudes that find a focus on Lake Mungo. Currently the New South Wales Government is preparing its Aboriginal Ownership Bill. This will transfer ownership of Lake Mungo National Park, (with three other significant Aboriginal places, Mootwingee - Mutawintji - Mt Grenfell and Yarrowick) to local Aboriginal communities. Joint management with the NSW National Parks Service is being discussed, and will maintain this spirit of shared perspectives, building on, but exceeding, mere commonality of concern. This should provide management appropriate to the plurality of values held by Mungo National park, and to its very special Aboriginal significance. Wider legislative and management changes are under consideration for New South Wales. These will implement the recommendations of the Task Force established some years ago to report to Government on future provisions for Aboriginal cultural heritage.

For the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area as a whole the management plans currently being developed are likely to stress strong involvement from local Aboriginal communities. As well as land holders, scientific researchers and relevant Government agencies, (both State and Federal) will contribute to management policy and its implementation. In this we will hope for management

structures in which shared understanding of diverse cultural values emerges as a directing force, and in which community values and social significance are recognized as vital components.

There is now a new arena in which all of us may develop innovative perspectives based on understanding and acceptance of values important to others in our society, and held to be present in the heritage places we investigate and protect as researchers or managers.

Such developments must be active processes, interactive with those concerned. Token recognition of the existence of other values is hardly sufficient. We must accept what cannot appropriately be shared, listening to those other 'voices' in the debate and respecting their messages. What should we do beyond listening to the 'voices' that inform us of other values? Are there further ways of promoting shared understanding in a pluralist society? A number of new directions would seem vital. First one might stress the promotion of educational opportunities for Aboriginal people in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, conservation practice and heritage management. In this we should recognize that as well as sharing our knowledge, skills and techniques, as educators we must be ready to see them taught and applied in new ways, ways that are culturally appropriate, so that a genuinely indigenous archaeology may emerge. The tradition of archaeology in our region will thus be enriched by new understandings and new



Fig. 5. Members of the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Services' Advisory Committee on Aboriginal sites guided by Peter Clark, then Lake Mungo's resident archaeologist, visit Lake Mungo in 1981. This Committee comprised both Aboriginal community members, heritage managers and archaeologists. On the right is Mrs. Alice Kelly, elder of the Balranald Community. Photograph by Isable McBryde

perspectives. We must be ready to accept that this may lead to its transformation into a very different archaeology from that currently in practice, which is grounded in western traditions of learning and knowledge construction.

Collaborative research projects form a second important direction for development. Colin Pardoe has called joint research Australian Heritage Commission. Already they are providing new insights relevant to research and assessment as well as to developing management policy. Social values, long 'the "Cinderella" of heritage survey work' (Blair 1993 p6) have been crucial for the work of the Commission's Regional Assessment programmes 'based on the recognition that the community holds extensive knowledge about heritage values', (Blair 1993 p6 see also p16). It also emerged that there was an ethical dimension, the obligation of heritage practitioners to involve community groups in assessment and decisions about places important to their lives.

*As social value derives from popular usage and meanings, it is essential that the assessment and management of such places must closely involve if not be led by, the community who use them... the process of understanding the social value of a place.... must therefore involve: Defining the 'community of interest'.... (Johnston 1992 p19; See also Blair 1993 p16).*

Significantly, discussions on the final form of the Willandra Lakes Region's Management Plan involve a Community Liaison Council representing major local interest groups such as the Aboriginal Land Councils and the land holders. It interacts closely with other committees representing scientific and government administrative interests.

Such developments foster exciting innovation, appropriate to the multi-layered values held by so many Australian heritage places. They may also stimulate new modes of thinking about the past and about heritage, as well as about pragmatics of its management. Shared

understanding of disparate values may become a reality. It could be empowered by the realisation that exploring the distinct ventures 'sharing the past' (1990, see especially p. 209; see also McBryde 1985 p. 2 and Creamer 1989 p. 130). They may also open up a shared future for the past's physical remains, and the expression of those new perspectives that could emerge from educational change. As Creamer points out 'integrating traditional with scientific pathways to knowledge of the past could yield a creative and meaningful interpretive synthesis' (1989 p. 130)

A third area is the development of joint management programmes for heritage areas. Important Australian models are already in place at *Uluru* and *Kakadu* in the arrangements between traditional Aboriginal owners and the Australian Nature Conservation Agency. They are rooted in acknowledgment of Aboriginal custodianship of the past and control of its physical expression in country, and are carefully structured in their legislative and administrative bases. Such collaborative arrangements are an important feature of management of significant areas of Maori heritage in New Zealand. Here the collaborative arrangements are termed 'management in partnership' and have significant history at places like *Tongariro National Park*. This important Maori cultural landscape also had a long history of value to the *Pakiha* community. Its partnership management facilitates expression of both cultural roles for this landscape (Titchen 1993 pp 9-10 and 12).

A fourth vital direction for the future lies in recognition of community values (as relevant to the assessment and management of heritage areas) and a concern for social values as well as scientific values in heritage discourse. Recently programmes eliciting and accommodating community values have been established by the cultural values and visions of those separate collectives within society enriches the wider social fabric.

Two hundred years ago that curiously perceptive First Fleet marine *Watkin Tench* was perplexed by the challenge



of cross-cultural communication between Aborigines and Europeans:

*..... no difficulty, but of understanding each other, subsisted between us. Inexplicable contradictions arose to bewilder our researches, which no ingenuity could unravel, and no credulity reconcile. (Tench [Complete Account.... 1793] 1961 p. 200).*

If we consider shared heritage as a matter of sharing the process of understanding differing values and working to accommodate them, then perhaps at last we may resolve these contradictions. The ideal may not be elusive, but amenable of transformation into a new reality. Thus the disparate cultural values may acquire new meanings, and we may achieve new understanding of the past, as well as of the needs of shared management or partnership in management for its material remains. Some years ago, Howard Creamer (1989) highlighted the relevance of T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' (*The Four Quartets*) to these issues.

Its words are as appropriate in conclusion as they were in my title.

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

#### Acknowledgements

This paper grew from ideas presented to the Australia ICOMOS Conference on 'Managing a Shared Heritage' held in Darwin in December 1993. It was a stimulating meeting and I am grateful for its rewarding exchange of ideas. My thanks to Dr. Peter Forrest, Conference Coordinator and Editor, for permission to use here some of the material from my Darwin paper. Ms. Carol Cooper, Pictorial Curator, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, kindly assisted in providing illustration of the 1992 ceremonial return of human remains.

*Fig. 6. Geomorphologist Professor Jim Bowler pointing out features of the stratigraphy of the Mungo 'Walls of China' lunette that make the Willandra Lakes Region such an important place for the study of Australia's geomorphology, landscape history and climatic change in the Pleistocene. The occasion was the 1983 unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the region's listing*

*as a World Heritage site. This was performed by Mr. Neville Wran, Premier of New South Wales (centre) in the presence of Professor Ralph Slatyer, who then chaired the World Heritage Committee (to his left), the writer (on Professor Slatyer's left) represented the Australian Heritage Commission. Photograph courtesy of the Australian Heritage Commission.*





Fig. 7. The return of the remains of the 'Mungo Lady' (c. 26,000 year old cremation burial, as yet the world's oldest record of this form) — January 1992. Members of Aboriginal communities, researchers and local land holders gathered on the lunette to

witness the ceremonial 'hand-over' at the burial site.

Photograph by Penny Taylor, reproduced courtesy of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

## References

Attwood, Bain and John Arnold (eds.) 1992. *Power, knowledge and Aborigines*, Special edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, La Trobe University Press and the National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, Melbourne.

Bates, B. 1993. 'Whose cultural values? Mootwingee National Park: A case study'. *Historic Environment* 10 (Nos 2 and 3).

Blainey, A. 1966. *The tyranny of distance: How distance shaped Australia's history*. M.U.P., Melbourne.

Blair, Sandy, 1994. *People's places: Identifying and assessing social value for communities*, 1993 Technical Workshop Series No. 6 Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Boddington, Jennie 1987. *Drysdale-Photographer*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Brown, H. 1989. 'Nolan's Journey to Paradise', *The Australian Magazine* 21-22 October, 1989 pp. 9-24.

Byrne, Denis 1991. 'Western, hegemony in archaeological heritage management', *History and Anthropology* 5 pp. 269-276

Byrne, Denis 1993. *The past of others: Archaeological heritage management in Thailand and Australia*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation ANU Canberra.

Creamer, Howard 1986. Unpublished report to the N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service on site Significance.

Creamer, Howard 1989. 'Aboriginal perceptions of the past: The implications for cultural resource management in Australia', In P. Gathercole and D. Lowenthal (eds.) *The politics of the past One World Archaeology* 12. Unwin Hyman, London pp. 130-140.

Domicelj, Joan and Duncan Marshall 1994. *Diversity, place and the ethics of conservation: A discussion paper*. Prepared for the Australian Heritage Commission on behalf of Australia ICOMOS.

Egloff, B. 1989. *The old Swan Brewery Site Perth: A report to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on information received and measures taken towards conciliation*, ANUTECH, Canberra.

Gostin, Olga 1993. *Accessing the Dreaming: Heritage, conservation and tourism at Mungo National Park*, University of South Australia, Adelaide.

Johnston, Chris 1992. *What is social value? A discussion paper*, Technical publications Series No. 3, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

McBryde, Isabel (ed.) 1985. *Who owns the past?*, Introduction, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

McGrath, S. 1984. 'Mungo: The world's best kept secret', *The Australian Magazine* 14/15 July.

- Marcus, Julie 1988. 'Journey out to the Centre: the cultural appropriation of Ayers Rock', *Kunapipi* 10 (1,2) pp 254-274.
- Mane-Wheoki, J. 1992. 'Sacred sites, heritage and conservation: Differing perspectives on cultural significance in the South Pacific', *Historic Environment* 9 (1 and 2).
- Pardoe, Colin 1990. 'Sharing the past: Aboriginal influence on archaeological practice: A case study from New South Wales', *Aboriginal History* 14 (2) pp. 208-223.
- Stapleton, Ian 1992. 'Assessing the European cultural significance of the Swan Brewery Site, Perth, W.A.', *Historic Environment* 9 (1 and 2) pp. 63-69.
- Sullivan, Sharon, 1993. 'Cultural values and cultural imperialism', *Historic Environment* 10 (2 and 3) pp. 54-62.
- Tench, Watkin 1961. *Sydney's first four years* ed. L.F. Fitzhardinge, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Titchen, Sarah 1993. *Evaluation of Tongariro National Park as an associative cultural landscape of outstanding universal value*, Report to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).
- Vinnicombe, Patricia 1989. *Gooninup: A site complex on the southern side of Mt Eliza An historical perspective of land-use and associations in the Old Swan Brewery area*, Western Australian Museum, Perth.
- Vinnicombe, Patricia 1992. 'An Aboriginal site complex at the foot of Mt Eliza which includes the old Swan Brewery', *Historic Environment* 9 (1 and 2) pp 53-62.