

Trust Action

Goat Island, Sydney Harbour

The Trust commends the National Parks Service on its Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Sydney Harbour's Goat Island but raises a number of concerns.

The Shipyard Crane at Goat Island was recently listed on the Trust Register for its age, historic importance, technical representativeness and rarity as an operating machine of its age.

The Trust didn't agree with the CMP's assessment of the Crane as only having "Moderate" heritage significance. As an historic item of equipment, as a relic of Mort's Dock and as a key visual element of views to and from Goat Island, it is a highly significant item on the Island.

The Trust is concerned that the CMP gives "National" significance to all its colonial buildings, despite their relatively low-status in their historical context. Compared with Norfolk Island, Port Arthur and even to Cockatoo Island, Goat Island was as a mere storehouse, whilst buildings such as the Rum Hospital, Government House Parramatta and the Female Factory at Rydalmere played a profound role in Australia's history.

Inexplicably, the Plan's policies lead to discussions on buildings which may be removed. The CMP treats later buildings and activities as intrusions on earlier buildings and pursues an overly aesthetic assessment of the impact of the buildings on each other.

This classic architectural approach, seeing buildings as elements of visual design in the landscape, may have some value for managing groups of buildings of high architectural standards. However, with the exception of the Harbourmaster's Residence, virtually all the buildings on Goat Island, whether erected by convict labour to English military designs or designed and built locally, are simple and functional buildings designed for specific industrial activities. Their relationship to each other is functional rather than visual, yet this aspect of their design is given no credit and is classed as an adverse impact.

Goat Island was never intended to be an architecturally high-quality complex. Suggesting it should become this by removing "unsightly" additions, is not sound heritage management but just a current fad for historical re-creation.

Goat Island was an explosives storage facility for seventy years and a maritime depot for ninety years. Significant fabric survives from both periods. There was only one Harbour Trust/MSB Depot (Goat Island) but there are extensive remains of four other explosive storage facilities in Sydney, as well as a large number of smaller magazines.

Goat Island is a key part of Australia's history as a maritime depot in Australia's primary shipping harbour when shipping was the only means of trade and transport to the rest of the world.

The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter would never allow the removal of elements of "State" heritage significance in order to reveal elements of "National" significance, an action that is implied in the CMP.

The Trust recommends that this section of the report, and any similar statements, be removed. The Trust does not consider every structure on the Island is sacrosanct. But the report provides a misleading impression that removal of important heritage buildings may be acceptable.

Regional News

From the Riversdale Fundraising Committee

The Riversdale Fundraising Committee is a new National Trust committee, formed on 27 October 2009, with committee members embarking enthusiastically into fundraiser activities that will enhance management and maintenance of the property.

During the past twelve months volunteers have been working extremely hard in caring for Riversdale and rejuvenating the glorious gardens. It seemed timely to form this committee that would not only see this work continue, but to raise funds that would contribute to maintaining this heritage treasure.

Committee Chairperson, Chris Marr, commented: "We are most fortunate to have a building and gardens of such significance in our city," and went on to say "The old house retains its gracious demeanour and the gardens invite people to wander and reflect."

On the outskirts of Goulburn, near the gaol, is Riversdale. It is the site of the earliest township of Goulburn. It was a natural point for coaches to stop and therefore naturally became an inn. As such, it also developed as the headquarters of the Mounted Police. There was a lock-up and court-house. At the inn there was a stable, able to contain fifteen horses.

Governor Bourke planned the re-siting of the town and so Goulburn moved away from Riversdale. It briefly became a boys' school and then home to the Twynan family. The family occupied the house for almost a hundred years. It was sold to the National Trust in 1967 along with the



Riversdale Fundraising Committee – Michael Bligh, Ros Loftus, Tim Geyer, Chris Marr and Cameron Park (not pictured)

family furniture and provides a fine picture of early life in the developing City of Goulburn.

Future fundraiser events by the committee include a host of activities in the coming months, starting with the Illara Show, a fabulous feast of arts and jazz booked for Friday 5 March. Following will be catering treats organised by the committee for the Heritage & Roses Festival from 6 – 14 March.

Riversdale Fundraising Committee also plan to host a Women's Business breakfast in February and catering for the International Day of Women in March.

These fundraisers are just the beginning for this enthusiastic committee, committed to reviving Riversdale as a prime tourist destination incorporating functions appropriate to the property's capacity.