

# Introducing Cultural Heritage

Elery Hamilton-Smith

## Abstract

Caves have fascinated all peoples. So they are often seen as places of spiritual importance, as a site of religious rituals, as a place of curiosity or a place of great beauty. So, in addition to their value as natural heritage and often of scientific importance, they have also been seen as cultural icons. In some cases, use of a cave as a sacred or other special place is inextricably related to the surrounding landscape and so falls into that group of heritage sites now known as cultural landscapes. At another level, some are places of great intensity, and our keynote speaker will discuss the very specific example of rock art.

## Introduction

Arguments for the protection and conservation of caves have often focussed upon their “scientific” values and there is no question that these are of great importance. Further, virtually all cave and karst sites recognised in the World Heritage Register have been inscribed on the basis of Natural Heritage Criteria. Most of the smaller number of sites inscribed as Cultural Heritage are archaeological sites. Similarly, much of the speleo-conservation rhetoric and the media coverage have focussed upon “science”.

Yet, if we reflect upon the real interest demonstrated in many cave areas by both managers and the public, then we can readily see that social, cultural and historical events and issues play a major role.

Some of this may be because entertainment will boost visitor numbers and make more money, but Buchan provides a fascinating example of a site that is extremely rich in its cultural values. In fact, the caves provide the core sense of identity for Buchan as a township and a community.

In making cultural heritage values a major theme of this conference, I am sure many other areas will be able to think of a comparable historical and cultural context in

their own cave area, although sadly, none have offered papers on this theme.

## The Fascination of Caves

Virtually all people appear to be fascinated by caves, or to find them of value as comfortable housing, a source of food, a shelter during war and other utilitarian purposes. Many stories have been told about them over the centuries. Perhaps most importantly, caves have also served as places for magic and worship. In short, virtually all cultures appear to be fascinated by caves for one reason or another. It also goes further back, not just to prehistoric peoples, but also even to early humanoids, and to our predecessors, including the Neanderthal.

## The First People

When the Aboriginal people arrived they would have found an attractive living area with plenty of good food and a number of rock shelters along both the Buchan and Murrindal rivers. The river flats would also have provided habitation sites in good weather. Cloggs Cave and New Guinea 2 Cave (on the Snowy River) are the only two sites to have been adequately investigated by archaeologists (Flood 1973, 1974; Ossa et al 2002).

Sadly, there are also major sites of the Aboriginal massacre by early settlers. Slaughterhouse Cliffs is probably the best-known example. White settlers claimed that the massacre which occurred here was necessary because the aboriginal people had been stealing sheep and cattle. The Aboriginal story is a very different one. A farm worker named Dan Moylan had kept a young Aboriginal woman tied up in his hut and raped her repeatedly. She was rescued and Moylan was killed by a group of aboriginals. This led to them being pursued and slaughtered. Probably the Gippsland area was the first area to see such major attacks on the aboriginal population. John Alexander Rose, who was one of the early pioneer settlers, left because of this and moved to the Grampians (Roses' Gap) where he became

known as a friend and protector of the Aboriginal people (Gardner 1990, 1993; Pepper and De Araugo 1985).

So, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage can be seen in Cloggs and New Guinea II caves, other rock shelters and campsites, and (sadly) the Slaughterhouse Cliffs.

### **White Settlement during the 19th Century**

Although the caves were recognised by Stewart Rylie (1840) in his survey expedition (and perhaps even earlier) they received little attention. Awareness of them gradually increased and by the 1880s some landowners and hotelier J. C. Wyatt, commonly took visitors through the caves. Broome (1886) described the lighting arrangements. Visitors were generally given candles but their leader would carry a bundle of stringy bark soaked in kerosene and light it when entering the cave. At that stage, the most popular cave tours appear to have been to Spring Creek and Wilson Cave.

Wyatt's Reserve was established in 1887 as a camping area and a stop for drovers. It is hardly a suitable site, but probably was the only bit of land not already taken up for pastoral purposes. As was often the case in southern Australia, the Buchan area became a focal point in the search for minerals and a small mine was initiated at the Pyramids.

This was not particularly successful but it did bring people with mining experience to the area and they probably were more willing to search for and enter caves. J. C. Wyatt was one of these and soon realised that he could make more out of mining by running a hotel than by looking for minerals. He laid an important foundation for the development of tourism.

The growing interest in caves led to the first scientific investigation by James Stirling of the Victorian Mines Department. J. H. Harvey of the Public Works Department, who happened to be one of the leading amateur photographers of the day and who took the excellent first photographs of the caves, accompanied him.

Harvey became an enthusiastic campaigner for the caves to be reserved and opened for tourism along the lines of the Jenolan Caves.

With the growing pressure for commercialisation, geologist Albert Kitson (later Sir Albert) was sent to report further on the caves and recommended an important series of reservations.

Aspects of cultural heritage that can be seen to this day include

- Wyatt's (long known as the Potholes) and Wilson reserves;
- Development of Wilson Cave both to provide for visitors and to provide a place where the locals held many parties and special events
- Spring Creek Cave as the site of Stirling's investigations
- Early buildings: Murrindal Homestead and Homeleigh come readily to mind.

### **The Fairy Cave Discovery**

Frank Moon had grown up in Buchan but went wandering as a prospector and miner. He was a very fit man and distinguished himself as a champion cyclist in the Kalgoorlie area. Given the competitiveness and difficulties of goldfields cycling (Fitzpatrick 1980), this was a significant achievement. His prize money enabled him to return to Buchan for a holiday with the family, where the caves fascinated him.

A young Missioner, John Flynn, who later became famous as Flynn of the Inland, joined him for a couple of years in exploration. Flynn's photography helped to make both the name of the caves and Frank Moon much better known. Then in 1907 Moon discovered Fairy Cave. In announcing this discovery he said "he had found Jenolan's rival." This was certainly a more beautiful cave than those already known and it was seen immediately as being particularly suitable for tourism.

A large number of visitors started to arrive and make their way through the cave, however, it was clear that this was not approved as there were fears that the cave would be damaged. So within a few weeks, the cave was closed and Frederick Wilson formerly of Jenolan was engaged to oversee the development and management of the caves. Wilson also played a part in continuing exploration and led the party responsible for discovering the Royal Cave.

Wilson could well be described as a self-taught engineer. His meticulous design and craftsmanship in construction of barriers from pipe and wire netting to protect the caves was of very high quality. In due course, he also demonstrated excellent capacity for designing and excavating tunnels where necessary. It was necessary to cut a trench through the flowstone floor in various places and he carefully preserved the speleothems that had to be removed. Many were placed in the *Font of the Gods*, so that the original three stalagmites were added and became the *Twelve Apostles*.

Fairy Cave proved the turning point for tourism development at Buchan. An excellent Guide Book was published (Whitcombe undated, but 1908) and regular tours were developed. The Caves were publicised at every opportunity and came to be seen as one of the great attractions of the State. The momentum generated by this discovery continued and there was probably little change until the 1930s. The cultural significance is self-evident and largely centres upon Wilson's craftsmanship.

### Improvements to the Cave Reserve

Small changes gradually developed, with the development of shelters for visitors who were waiting for a tour to commence, some garden beds, and improved walking tracks. The beginning of significant improvement came in the 1930s when the Committee of Management appointed Landscape Architect, Hugh Linaker, to provide a planting plan for the beautification of the reserve. His plan was only implemented slowly but after Moon's retirement in 1940, Phillip Sandford (previously a foreman at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens) was appointed as Manager and energetically completed the planting very much as initially designed by Linaker.

The other major change came in 1938 when the Minister for Lands, Albert Lind, decided to establish Buchan Caves Reserve as a National Park. His concept of a National Park was that it would be a place that would provide a range of opportunities for recreational activities. At Buchan this was expressed with the caravan park, a camper's kitchen, tennis courts and a swimming pool. The archway, that still welcomes visitors to the Park, was also built at this time. The constructed features tended to

be modelled upon those in the United States National Parks and adopted the form known as "Parkitecture". The gateway and the various visitor shelters are excellent examples of the genre.

So, socially inspired features of the Reserve, developed during the 1930s, remain to this day as a central element of the cultural heritage. Caves House, originally built to house Frank Moon, is still maintained. The main street also has Homeleigh (formerly the Cricket Club, then Buchan Hotel), the current Buchan Hotel (formerly Riverview House), Callemondah and the shops of the period. Regrettably, John Flynn's cottage has been demolished.

### The Photographic Story

The photography of the caves and their place in the landscape is more than a record of local history - its timing is such that it encapsulates much of the history of photography.

J.H. Harvey used glass plate negatives. But interestingly, he was one of those who continued to use wet plates long after the dry plate technology became available. This meant that he could check the quality of each photograph on site, and if it proved to be unsatisfactory, it was easy to clean off the plate, re-coat it with emulsion, and re-photograph the scene.

Both James H. A. MacDougall (of Walden Studio at South Buchan) and George Rose produced stereographic pictures, which were extremely popular and which were very well suited to provide a sense of depth and perspective in cave photographs. MacDougall also distinguished himself as the first cave photographer to realise that placing his lighting to one side of the intended view showed the crystal structure of cave speleothems much better than the flat effect of frontal lighting.

John Flynn lived through the transition to modern technology and so used various techniques. But although his early photographs were on glass plates, probably on the advice of his mentor Norman Caire, it was Howard Bulmer who really marked the beginning of modern film photography.

Meanwhile, off to one side, J.A. Sears, responsible for much Victorian Railways photography, used a panoramic camera in his

wonderful landscapes and even had the courage to hold it on its side to capture vertical scenes, including his great picture of the coach to Buchan crossing the Boggy Creek Bridge.

### The Cultural Landscape concept

A brief definition of the Cultural Landscape idea is provided in the Operational Guidelines for the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2005, para 47):

*Cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the “combined works of nature and of man”.....They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.*

A well-developed discussion can be found in Phillips (2004) and this argues that the basic principle centres about the continuing integrity of the relationship between culture and nature.

Buchan provides an excellent example with its evidence of the relationship between people on one hand and the karst and river environments on the other. It certainly demonstrates the mutual inter-relationship between people and environment.

In fact, the broader region might even be considered with the early pastoral runs; the Lake Tyers Aboriginal settlement, the remaining evidence of the early cave tours in the lakes shipping, Lakes Entrance, Tyers House, Lake Tyers and Boggy Creek; and Cameron’s Quarry, which provided the marble for the State Library Building and Australia House in London.

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