NOTICE OF 50TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held in the Museum
Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide on

MONDAY 22 NOVEMBER, 1976 AT 8.00 PM

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Confirmation of minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Monday 24
   November, 1975. Copies of these minutes are attached.

3. Annual report from the Secretary and Treasurer to be received. Copies
   of these reports are attached.


5. Presidential Address.
   Several films by the President, Dr. C.P. Mountford, will be screened at
   this meeting. At this stage of going to press, the films under consider-
   ation are:-

   Aborigines of the Sea Coast
   Arnhem Land
   Birds and Billabongs

   These may be changed at the last minute depending upon availability.

   Supper will be served after the meeting.

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THE NGAIAWANG FOLK PROVINCE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE

24 NOVEMBER 1975

In 1926 when this Society was formed, one of its stated objects was the 'preservation' of the Aborigines as a race. Today, this function has long since dropped from sight and was excised from the constitution in one of its recent revisions.

The concept bears recall tonight because it reminds us that in 1926 the extinction of the Aborigines as a race and a culture was a real possibility and their preservation was a matter of sincere concern to all good and thinking men. It also bears identifying as an insurance of a certain preserving and conserving sentiment, which is deeply implanted into our culture.

In Adelaide in 1926 the cause of conservation was a novel one. There was a Museum but it was a publicly endowed body and shared its premises with a public library and an art gallery. There was a small University and some scientific societies. There was a Zoo and a Botanical Garden.

There was an emerging interest in the preservation of this island continent’s unique landscape and creatures, but it was in a very undeveloped state. The Fauna and Flora Reserve Act had been passed in 1919 adding to an earlier National Pleasure Resorts Act passed in 1914. There was also a branch of the British Science Guild, a product of the momentous holding of the B.A.A.S. meeting in Australia in 1914. The Guild’s aim was to ensure the preparation of handbooks covering all aspects of the State’s Natural History.

There were however no fauna and flora protection acts. These came in 1939. There was no instrument for placing the Museum or its sister institutions under Government patronage. These also came in 1939. There was no provision for the historic culture of the colonists, the passing of the National Trust Act was to come almost 30 years later. It was not until yet another decade had passed after this, that an Aboriginal and Historic Relics Act was to be passed. The crowning instrument of the State’s entry into conservation via planning controls, had to wait until 1967 when the State Planning Act was passed by Parliament.

In 1926, there appears to have been no statute even for regulating the relations between full blood Aborigines and the other inhabitants of the State; although there had been successive inquiries in 1860, 1899 and 1912. Such a statute did not emerge as law until 1934.

Today the situation has been completely transformed. In addition to having their social position, education, land and other basic rights in Federal hands and in the care of major departments, the Aborigines' traditional sites of...
significance are the object of a national and well endowed programme, their ancient and historic culture is the commission of a richly endowed body (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies) to promote, and only a week ago a report was published detailing the needs of support to that part of the Aboriginal Heritage which is kept in Museums. The study and teaching of Australian tribal culture is now catered for at levels of our educational establishment.

Our Society, like other public bodies of its kind, might well feel bemused at its retirement to the wings or even back into the general body of the audience. It may, as if often does, query its continued existence in the face of such a cloud of witnesses, notwithstanding the importance of the role it played in bringing about some of these changes, many years ago.

In other areas of conservation, the change has been equally dramatic. The conservation of our natural and cultural environment is the responsibility of a host of flourishing agencies. We are arriving at a point where something which is coming, to be referred to as the National Estate has become a public issue which is being debated at the highest level of National policy making and is having certain of its repercussions felt throughout the whole structure of the economy. As a consequence, it is having its credibility tested to the utmost. As a further consequence, it is having to be thoroughly researched.

There is then provision for a National Estate, but the debate continues. The reality of that debate is thrown into heightened relief by the often mutually conflicting and warring agencies claiming to serve it, as against those dedicated to resisting it. We are all familiar with the issues of recent years - the Clutha controversy, the Greenbans, the Lake Pedder controversy and the Hallett Cove Inquiry.

The issues raised probe deeply into our makeup, exciting debate upon what constitutes individual or corporate freedom of choice, whether there should be unlimited freedom of action to use subterranean resources at will or whether the general public's access to tracts of natural and built environment in their undisturbed state should take precedence. Philosophically and politically, they are very troubled waters indeed and it is not my intention tonight to fish too deeply in them except to make the point that the debate is a continuing one. I hope also to stress one answer which may contribute to its resolution.

Although the debate on the National Estate in Australia compares closely with comparable debates in other countries, it has a dimension in this country which is uniquely its own. Although in our ethos and cultural style we Australians continue to betray our descendancy from historic newcomers migrated from far distant lands, we are also made very much aware that we are possessors of landscapes, creature systems and cultures that are vastly different from that which our ancestors emerged from. Thus, whereas priorities of sentiment attach Australians to the languages, landscapes and chattels of distant lands (themselves curated by the present day populations of those lands) Australians have also been made custodians of native phenomena, which while intrinsically curious, are still essentially alien. This is why the debate on conservation in this country has always swayed upon the factor of relevance. This is why Australians have never been able to make up their minds fully about just what should be conserved.
The voices of opposition have a familiar ring - 'what is the use of preserving old buildings in the European tradition when the best specimens compare only feebly with those in Europe itself?;' 'what is the value of preserving tracts of wilderness from capital intensive development if the resources hidden beneath them will contribute to the everyday life of all people here and now?;' 'what is the point of preserving monuments of the hunting and gathering tribal culture if spectacular specimens are to be found in other places?' It is by arguments such as these that we are counselled to dampen our ardour to preserve.

There is a presupposition hidden within this debate which is insufficiently recognised. That presupposition is that Australian history is at base a synthesis of two utterly different human ecologies, the one implanted on the other but inexorably transforming it. To see this for what it is requires that we first investigate the blend which has emerged and only after that to consider the elements that have combined to create it. I suggest that precisely this perspective is what is lacking most in Australian cultural conservation science now.

This is what the Ngaiawang Folk Province is all about.

The Ngaiawang Folk Province is an experimental investigation into the applicability of a concept - the National Folk Province concept - first broached to the Federal Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate two years ago.

The main points of this concept were set forth as follows:

1. First it seeks to project the idea of conserving cultural objects within their original landscapes. In this way they can be preserved in situ and only after being restored to selected specimens of the environments from whence they came.

2. Second, just as the governing factor in selecting artifacts up till now preserved has been their significance in explaining our situation in the world of today, so the principle governing the selection of environments to be reserved should also be their significance in explaining our present circumstances.

3. Third and following on from this, such tracts may have to be more extensive in area than is currently allowed for by the term 'park' and that as such they are not only a resource for resident populations ad viable economics will probably incorporate living residents within their boundaries. They will thus have to be chosen with considerable care if they are to represent the full sweep of Australian history as we know it and justify the application of controls.

The phrase 'National Folk Province' followed naturally from this. The work 'National' underlines the proper basis of its choice, the work 'Folk' underlines its equivalence of applicability to Aboriginal and European parts of our makeup and its bonding of them together by the common challenge of landscape. The choice of the word 'Province' describes the scale of the tract of landscape requiring reservation.
The concept was justified on the grounds that until now the factors governing the choice of reserves have been those of convenience and availability. This has given rise to a considerable amount of dispersion, a definite margin of duplication, while leaving grave and fundamental gaps in the spectrum of phenomena needing reservation. The record of multidisciplinary research into the natural and cultural landscape spectra has been a poor one.

As a concept it was further justified for restoring a more Aboriginally based perspective upon conservation. A common thread running through Aboriginal belief systems was the conviction that men themselves, by their possession of vital chants and knowledge handed down from before, had both the power of, and responsibility to, maintain all creation through their ritual. Such a mind viewed the natural environment itself as its truest creation and monument, not the residue of daubed and scratched rocks, surfaces, scattered stones and scarred trees which we today classify as their heritage. It follows that the conservation of tracts of natural landscape, unaltered by European modes, is a faithful monument to the Aboriginal past.

Lastly, it was justified on the grounds that it would both reduce the proportion of and increase the effectiveness of public funds expended upon Nature conservation. Put simply, it takes the popular conception of a reserve as a place where the hand of man is faint, and inverts it, arguing that man's present imprint upon the ground is a fairly accurate measure of what on this earth has been most important to him longest.

Considered overall, the National Folk Province, studies Aboriginal, colonist and nineteenth century Australians from the massed imprint of their lifeways left behind in the landscape they lived in. It suggests that archaeological and historic Aboriginal sites are best presented in landscape surrounds of validated historicity. It suggests that collections of the classic pastoralist period are best situated in buildings and surrounds of that era. It suggests that we recognise exotic florals and faunas of the colonists as valid artifacts of the European presence, meriting preservation in their own right. The National Folk Province concept therefore isolates out a central feature of Australian cultural history - man's transforming effect on his environment - and makes it the basis of public conservation planning.

In order to give the concept some specific application, a tract of land in the Murray Mallee was selected for study. Bounded on the north, east and south by river systems and on the west by a mountain range, it was given the name Ngaliawang, a name drawn from the given name of the principal tribal group once dwelling within its boundaries. The choice of this as a test case was justified on a number of grounds - historical, archaeological and ecological. It can be fairly claimed that every major cultural change in the State's history since the Pleistocene is accurately reflected within the bounds of this region. Certain of them, furthermore, began there.

The submission bearing this title was laid before the Federal Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate late in 1973. It went up as one of a batch of submissions from the South Australian Department of Environment & Conservation.

The Committee had been appointed and supplied with its terms of reference in May of that year. Its purpose was to make an overall review of Australia's non-convertible resources in order to (1) define them (2) assess their present condition (3) advise on the role which Federal Government might take
in their conservation and presentation (4) advise on the appropriate research and educational agencies this would require and (5) how best to give direct assistance to public bodies devoted to the tasks of conservation.

The Report on the National Estate, which appeared late last year (September 1974) was set out along these lines. It has become Australia's first systematic national review of the humanly made and naturally occurring environment. From it has emerged the first national agency to make this environment its protective concern.

The definition of the National Estate as contained in this report is comprehensive. It includes the natural environment in all its aspects both within and without existing reserves. It similarly includes the man-made or cultural environment. It includes archaeological or scientific areas and cultural property.

This last concern it has come to share with the more recently established committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections and the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, whose report has only just appeared.

Even a brief consideration of the National Folk Province concept identifies its closeness with many of the principal concerns of the National Estate Committee. Its concern with landscape as a man made thing, its concern to choose, clarify and evaluate it in detail by research, its concern with residents, with prudent public funding and planning controls, and its overall concern with the grand themes of Australian cultural history, awarded it the Committee's serious interest, a call to appear before them at their Adelaide public hearings and their visit to the area of the proposed province.

In its first issue of grants, early in 1974, the Interim body set up to carry out the Committee's work. $20,000.00 was set aside for studies and land acquisition for and investigation into the Folk Province concept. After discussions between Dr. Inglis, Mr. Yencken (Chairman of the Interim Committee) Mrs. J. Brine (the Committee's South Australian representative) and myself, it was resolved to devote part of the money to setting up a longterm and comprehensive Feasibility Study.

In issuing the grants, members of the Commission pointed to one obvious deficiency in the siting of the Ngaiawang test case - its remoteness from the sea. In order therefore to ensure that the feasibility studies could be extended to include a coastal component, funds were awarded for the conduct of a further similar study for an extent of coastline bounded by the towns of Robe and Beachport in the South East of the state.

The form of the study addressed itself to two fundamental needs:

1. The need for a cultural resource inventory. This is not merely a table or register of sites. It addresses itself to the importance of using a limited area and, by subjecting it to sustained study, arriving at a classification of man-made phenomena that is (i) comprehensive (ii) validly represents the known duration of human existence and (iii) sets out, within the broadest possible scope, the varieties in its appearances or manifestations.
One of the first prerequisites of a national archaeology is a good historical topography. In Europe, Archaeology did not emerge as a systematic science until the subdivision of human sites and artifacts into the three 'ages' of stone, bronze and iron, was demonstrably proven. Nor did its extension towards the present awake of people of those countries to their true resources of national feeling until Roman or Celtic, Dark Age or Medieval or afterwards revealed the richness of patterning contained within landscape. The various National Commissions for manuscripts, monuments and the inventories of all classes of folk and cultural phenomena the assembled the foundations for the archaeology of Western Europe.

In Australia, we currently employ a variety of site and cultural classifications. Most of them are formal and descriptive and not related to broader sweeps of cultural change through time. Moreover, they are still restricted almost wholly to Aboriginal hunter-gatherer systems. There are no classifications for the man-made environment of the first settlers or their descendants. As a consequence there is no agreed-upon classification which can serve as a basis for monitoring, quantifying and evaluating cultural phenomena for public purposes. There are only 'sites' or 'complexes' and the ranking of any of them as more or less important than the other is problematical.

It is our lack of discriminating instruments of this kind that has limited governmental action in this area to an ad hoc basis and there the debate remains. The situation is grave. So then, the first task specified as necessary for a National Folk Province study was the preparation of a valid, research-based cultural resource inventory.

2. There was a need to investigate the public administration of heritage matters.

It was felt that the reasons why some people strive and combine to preserve the past, while others ignore it, deserve investigation. The old shibboleth of improved education has been proven irrelevant to this so often it is strange to see it recur. It was also felt that the reasons why people feel constrained to bulldoze down the past were worthy of inquest. The extent of destruction of historic buildings by bulldozers on hire landowners over the past decade is a study in itself.

It was decided therefore to pay attention to a resource inventory which might assist the Commission in its work and be of assistance to State and public conservation agencies. The conduct of restricted inquiries into problem areas brought about by the test application of such resources, was felt to have value in clarifying the effectiveness of existing procedures.

From the outset, it was felt important to give first attention to the development of a resource inventory. Subsequently, it was decided to combine both the tasks and funds of the Ngilawang and the Robe projects, in order to obtain the greatest advantage from the funds.

Staff were thereupon appointed.

Mr. Donovan was appointed as Graduate Officer to compile an inventory.

He was assisted by Mrs. Zimmer-Hart.

18.
More recently Mr. Barry Rowney has been appointed Specialist Architect (Historic Buildings) and Mrs. Carey appointed Office Assistant.

In addition to assisting with the inventory, Mr. Rowney will pay special attention to the heritage problems of Kapunda, a town within the province.

More recently, a steering committee, combining representatives of the Federal Department of Urban and Regional Development, our South Australian Department of Environment and Conservation, and the National Trust, has been appointed to oversee the operation of the study.

A substantial inventory has been put together for the Ngaiawang Folk Province and preparations are being made to investigate the Robe-Beachport area.

The inventory compilation will be carried out in three stages. The first of these aims to lay out the optimum scope of the inventory in its broadest sense, classifying it and illustrating it by specimens. It is not viewed as restricted to sites or open air structures - it also takes in such things as place names, and collections of objects. The second stage foresees the inventories evaluation by considering what has survived as against what has been lost.

Drawing from such a base, the third stage will seek to evaluate preservation priorities and establish criteria that are appropriate for them.

I will not go into the detail about the allied area of applied research here as it is still in its formative stage. What can be reported at this stage is the progress we have made with our classification. This we are calling an 'Outline Sketch' of an Inventory. I shall illustrate this to you tonight by drawing upon the results of our work in the Ngaiawang Province.

All landscape phenomena have first been subdivided into major chronological eras as follows:-

I Prehistoric phase  
II Protohistoric phase  
III Pioneer settler phase  
IV Total colonisation phase  
V Urban industrial phase

These in their turn have been sub-subdivided into functional classes.

1. Settlements  
2. Sites of endorsed significance  
3. Resource recovery and processing points  
4. Communication routes

Let me now elaborate

I Prehistoric phase.

This covers all hunter-gatherer sites as revealed to us by archaeological investigation. These may be sub-subdivided into Pleistocene and Holocene on the basis of art and assemblages.
The following transparencies illustrate prehistoric settlements, occasional camps, graves and cemeteries, trackways, resource processing sites, art/ritual sites and stones emplacements.

II Pioneer Colonist phase

This phase covers the first entry of the white men. It caters for the initial exploration of the land and the haphazardness of the course it took. The first entry of stock and the original assumption of colonist land tenure over the area in its entirety.

So far we have distinguished the following range of sites:

- Occasional camps
- Dwellings and structures
- Settlements
- Tracks and stock routes
- Resource points - tanks, dams and springs
- Taverns, posting houses and allied services

III The Intensive Colonisation of the Province.

This phase sees the systematic exploitation of the province's resources by which it was transformed into what substantially is its present day state. This phase saw the establishment of pastoralism, the inception of mineral mining, and the spread of intensive agriculture following on from the invention of cereal farming machinery towards the end of the last century. Some of the most important of these machines were invented in South Australia, one of the most spectacular of them, the stripper, within the bounds of the Ngaiawang Province.

As this phase also sees the breakdown of Aboriginal society as a polity and an economy, the redistribution of the Aborigines demographically and then their virtual disappearance, separate attention has been devoted to post-contact Aboriginal phenomena. This is a vitally important study as it forms a link between traditional Aboriginal polity and to-day.

Mining deserves separating out from this period for special attention. Mining is best known from Burra and Kapunda, although mining was also carried on at Truro.

Burra's heritage significance is already amply acknowledged by the National Trust. Kapunda, even earlier, where settlement was more compact and intensive and where preservation has been better, has however been a special interest of ours.

A preliminary study of the town, showing how its form and composition changed in response to the changing economic factors, was prepared several months ago by Barry Rowney and Rob Charlton, the town's historian.

It is to be published.

A specific study of Mine Square, Australia's oldest mineral mining monument and of which one or two buildings still remain, is also in hand.
One of the structures, a stone chimney, is already protected under the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Act.

IV. The Urban Industrial Phase.

This final phase, leading through to our own time, is absurdly fascinating because it discloses the redistribution of settlement as a result of droughts, international war and the social and political pressures leading towards autarky. They illustrate the force of this overall historic force despite the attempts to offset it by large-scale public-funded river control and soldier settlement schemes. There interrupted but failed to divert the situation of today where the country is becoming steadily drained of its people and the landscape is becoming the preserve of more dispersed populations, smaller towns, and crisscrossed by highway, pipeline or electric powerlines connecting urban agglomerations.

This phases poses the public curator with the obvious problem of a cutoff point. Here I consider the vital consideration is the traditional one - preservation at the moment of obsolescence.

There are a number of components of this phase which could do with treatment. I shall list them -

(1) The inception of River control schemes. The construction of locks and pumping stations.

(2) The inception of irrigated farming schemes - these strictly fall outside the boundaries of the folk province.

(3) The development of connector routes, the replacement of prints, the straightening, widening and improvement of roads.

(4) The exhibition of a self conscious national ethos, the tallying of war memorials and explorer monuments, in particular those without benefit of State or Local Government.

(5) The transformation of land tenure from being capital earning, or intensive, to being creatonal.

We can best instance this by the dense subdivisioning of Murray lands for weekend and recreation building in recent years.

Conclusion

The exposition is now past its proper closure. It is far from complete - for example, it takes no account of certain other factors such as the influence of exotic plant introductions, the parallel influence of introduced animals. At Kapunda in the 1850's rabbits were a curiosity worth a Sunday excursion yet by the late 1880's they virtually ruined farmers on the Roonka flat.

Nevertheless it is to be hoped this record even in its developing form is sufficient to demonstrate that far from being an anonymous expanse, the South Australian landscape is a richly textured thing. It suggests moreover that in occupying it, from the moment of man's most distant record, its inhabitants created their own changes and instruments whose imprint bears a characteristic
stamp. This makes it useful to the archaeologist who is thereby enabled to monitor it, and value it for its significance and worth.

The classification of naturally occurring phenomena have always been the work of Museums. So has the application of these classifications in the clarifying of national culture. Thanks to the Australian Heritage Commission some of us are being equipped to make preliminary inquiries into the meaning of the Australian cultural landscape.

I am happy that one of the first organisations to hear a report on this project is this Society, whose members have always involved themselves in every project of the humanly made environment.

In closing I wish to acknowledge my debt to those who by their interest and assistance have ensured the launching of this project. I refer of course to the people who worked with me at Roonka, where an enforced seven year stay at a single locality has eloquently demonstrated the rapidity of our cultural environments' decay.

I also commend the work of the project staff, now entering upon a most interesting and rewarding phase.

Graeme Pretty,
South Australian Museum