

INTRODUCING CULTURAL HERITAGE

– Elery Hamilton-Smith

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addressing delegates – Conference 2007



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 Ryrie (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

- Wyatts (long known as the Potholes) and Wilson reserves;
- Developments 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 gold fields 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.



Dr. Warren Peck (left) chats with Professor Elery Hamilton Smith – Conference 2007

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 Linacre.

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 campers 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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SAYING WHAT WE MEAN: COMMENTS ON THE VOCABULARY OF TOURISM

– Elery Hamilton-Smith

Introduction

We commonly believe that professionals choose their words with care and a sense of precision. In fact, for a range of reasons, this is not the case. We fall into using words that have long been used uncritically, which are fashionable or which we even simply do not fully understand.

The continuing changes in society provide another trap. To quote Régis Debray, *'We are never completely contemporaneous with our present. History advances in disguise; it appears on stage wearing the mask of the preceding scene and we lose the meaning of the play.'*

The combination of these various factors mean that although we may think we are clear about what we think, our selection of words may convey a very different idea to our audience. This appears to be particularly troublesome in tourism and I am going to discuss a few examples.

The Ubiquitous Guides

First of all, there has always been some ambiguity in the relationship between the travelers and those who seek to accompany them along their way. Casson (1974:105), in summarizing the experience of Herodotus during his Egyptian travels (c. 450 BC), discusses the extent to which he had problems in relying upon 'guides' and 'interpreters'. Plutarch (c. 100 AD) was probably their most articulate critic, saying, for example:

'...The guides went through their standard speech, paying no attention whatsoever to our entreaties to cut the talk short and leave out most of the explanations....'

'...The guides at Argos know very well that not all the stories they tell are true, but they tell them anyway.'

Of course, the use of the word 'guide' in these references is simply an artifact of translation. We do not know what the Egyptian or Latin words were. But it is clear that as Casson (1974) comments, *'...local guides have not improved very much in the last 2,000 years.'*

Modern English language tourism (as distinct from travel) probably had a large part of its origin in the concept of the Grand Tour, where the sons (not daughters) of aristocratic families were taken on an extended tour usually of the European continent under the leadership of a tutor, usually known as a 'bear'. The bears were expected to help their charges in learning to be an adult aristocratic male, even including the identification and recruitment of appropriate women for sexual enjoyment. (Hudson 1993). The term 'guide' gradually came into prominence with the democratization of tourism, as initiated by Thomas Cook. (Swinglehurst 1982)

One only has to look superficially at contemporary tourism literature to find a multitude of papers dealing with ways of refining the role of 'guides' or improving their performance, but this plethora of ideas appears to have only impacted upon a relatively small number of sites. Worst of all, today's equivalents of Plutarch's guides often have the additional benefit of electronic megaphones!

But once labeled as 'guides', most people continue to guide with all the skills of 2,000 years ago. My time in South-East Asia has now brought me to a realization that the problem is inherent in the word and the idea of 'guiding', not in the failure of the people themselves. In Vietnam (particularly at Ha Long Bay) and in South China (particularly at Shilin), I have experienced the finest visitor services staff of my whole life experience.

Let me start with Halong Bay. Visitors to the key sites (e.g., Hang Dau Go) all arrive in boatloads. One of the staff will walk to the landing to greet each boat but her key task is to identify the key language for the group. If it is not amongst her languages, she will find the person best equipped to talk with the group. Whoever continues with the party will give a very brief description of the site and then say:

"Now, you can all walk off along the pathways by yourselves, taking your time to see what you want. If you have any questions, you can ask any of the staff you will see along the way. Or, if you want it, I will come with you." If a party chooses the latter, then she will walk with them joining in general conversation with the group, but not leading them nor reciting the story of the site. Part of the charm of this site is its remarkable multi-lingualism. I once led a seminar for the visitor service staff and found the 17 who were on duty that day spoke 25 languages! Most visitors are thus welcomed with their own language or a closely related one that they largely understand.

Then in Shilin, the Yi people provide all visitor services in a very similar way. They are also multi-lingual, and having learned from radio and television, their English is of the perfect BBC style with its clarity of diction and rich vocabulary. They relate to visitors in the same way as the Vietnamese, but they have a further interesting twist in quality of service. If a clearly infirm person arrived who might trip and fall, one of the staff stayed within no more than a metre from them. On noticing this, I asked and was told that they were all given special training to catch a falling person and that they could not remember any who actually reached the ground.

But the key thing came when I asked each of the two groups, the word in their language that was used to describe their job and its most accurate translation into English. Both told me that the best translation is 'host'. This was, in fact, a very good description of their behavior. Probably, our

most outstanding 'guides' would also be better described as 'hosts'.

I now believe that my South-East Asian friends have got it absolutely right. They don't need to go on endless training programs to redefine their role. They fill the role superbly without condescension or obsequiousness: I remember feeling absolutely delighted that the Yi people treated me as an equal and I saw that as a real compliment.

Interpretation

We have also made a minor industry out of what we call interpretation, which is a long-standing extension of the basic meaning of the word. Probably, a lot of its popularity is owed to Freeman Tilden's work and, in particular, his argument that knowledge and understanding is a vital prerequisite to appreciation. There is no evidence to support this idea but one often finds appreciation as a virtually immediate emotional response to many natural phenomena. A further problem lies in the extent to which we seem to be stuck in the underlying assumptions of cognitive psychology theory and pay little or no attention to other more significant bodies of theories in, e.g., the cultural basis of perception or the whole field of man-environment relationship.

It is, after all, fundamentally important that appreciation and love of nature is a far more potent force in both visitor satisfaction and developing a sense of environment than any scientific understanding of nature.

Also there is a very basic practical problem in assuming that we must interpret what people see or experience. If 'interpretation' is to be effective, then it demands comprehension of the existing values and knowledge of the person we are addressing and that is simply impractical. The result is that visitors are either confused by too much information or totally bored by things they have heard all too often. I often feel that the 'guide' is talking down to people and this is totally offensive, simply because it fails to treat visitors with respect and dignity.

In fact, this becomes one of the implications of moving from the concept of 'guide' to 'host'. When we host people in our own home, which is the

model of hosting most are familiar with, we would not subject them to an interpretive address about the home. Similarly, my South-East Asian friends with their focus on hosting and helping people to feel absolutely welcome and at home, do not indulge in what we call interpretation. They are, in fact, very well informed about the natural and cultural history of the sites where they are working, sometimes drawing upon a thousand years or more of wisdom and experience. But they do not make that compulsory for all; although they may well draw upon it in answering a question.

Tours – Should we offer them?

A number of writers have distinguished between travelers and tourists and noted the extent to which many people see being a traveler as much more valuable and dignified than being a tourist. One of our very excellent 'guides' in Australia always welcomes visitors saying, "Now let me be clear. I am not taking you on a tour. I am taking you on a journey of discovery. What you discover along that journey may be about nature, it may be about yourself and or other people, it may be about science or it might be about your sense of God. Whatever it is, it is for you to discover, not for me to tell you."

Conclusion

There is really no excuse for doing (or saying) things the way we have always done or said them. In essence, I am arguing for a rethink of our basic vocabulary and for the use of words that do not lead us into trying to make them mean something different. It is quite obviously simple commonsense to select the word which will convey what we mean without ambiguity.

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