Changing heritage, changing values: memories of two World Wars in South Australia's Barossa Valley
Presented at ICOMOS conference on 20th Century heritage, Adelaide,

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Abstract

The concept of cultural heritage has changed significantly since the 1970s, when the first formal systems for registering and protecting heritage places were set up at national and state level in Australia. It has expanded to include the less powerful groups in society as well as dominant groups and the vernacular, commonplace and recent as well as the grand and 'old'. Social value has emerged as a criterion in heritage identification, opening possibilities for more inclusive assessment and listings. Social value is particularly relevant at local level and has influenced new recommendations for local heritage listings for twentieth century war memorials (monuments, halls and sculpture) in the Barossa Valley in South Australia.

During World War I, Barossa German communities were suspected of disloyalty and persecuted. Discrimination against this community in World War II was present but less severe. Barossa men from German backgrounds fought with the Australian armed forces in both wars. Some were killed. World War I memorials, including three town halls, were built in the 1920s when the memories of persecution and ostracism were fresh. Claiming full rights as Australian citizens was important for the self-respect and Australian identity of the Barossa German community. Additional plaques and some extensions were added to the memorials following World War II.

Applying predominantly architectural criteria has excluded from State and National heritage registers these memorials to events which profoundly affected the community. A recent local heritage survey recommends that several Barossa war memorials be included in a local heritage register for their social and historical value. Their formal local heritage listing will acknowledge their cultural significance to the community and provide a mechanism for conservation and management through the Development Plan.

Keywords: cultural heritage, social value, war memorials, Barossa.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, the concept of heritage, and particularly cultural heritage, has been extensively debated, reworked and expanded. Lowenthal (1997, pp. 14-19) summarises three dimensions of this expansion as being 'from the elite and grand to the vernacular and everyday; from the remote to the recent; and from the material to the intangible'.

Our perceptions of heritage are fundamentally influenced by our views of the past, and its relationship to the present and future. These views have also changed significantly since the 1970s, especially under the influence of post-modernist thinking. Rather than seeing the past as fixed and stable, we now tend to see it as being constantly reshaped, with each

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new shape reflecting the interests and perspectives of the group which is involved in communicating it, and the audiences to whom it is being communicated (Davison, 2000; Cotter et al., 2001). The past and heritage are described as 'organic and dynamic' (Fowler, 1989 p. 63) and as continually reshaped by the present (Lowenthal, 1985, pp. 410-411). Lowenthal contends that only 'by altering and adding to what we save does our heritage remain real, alive, and comprehensible'.

The ambit of history and heritage has extended over this period to be more inclusive, pluralistic and democratic, moving away from representation of the interests and activities of dominant cultural and social groups in society (Jenkins, 1991; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; White, 1997). Until relatively recently, those less powerful have tended to be disinherited, in the sense that their heritage has not been identified as part of the national heritage or has been ignored (Bennett, 1988; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; White, 1997). Cultural factors such as religion, language and ethnicity and social factors such as class and gender are the primary ways in which the heritage of some groups may differ from that of the dominant cultural or social groups and lead to their exclusion from the dominant interpretations of heritage.

The narrow view of what is important in Australia's history has been reflected in the selection of places for inclusion on formal heritage registers. The National Trusts, for instance, were initially concerned with gentlemen's residences and buildings such as churches and towns halls which represented Victorian bourgeois society. (Davison, 2000). The Australian Heritage Commission and the State heritage authorities initially relied heavily on the National Trust lists to establish their own registers. These registers have gradually been widened to include a places representing broader cross sections of society and to include vernacular as well as designed buildings.

Yet concerns about the limited range of places with formal heritage 'badging' remain. Russell (1997, p. 74) argues that 'heritage has mostly been content with values in mainstream histories rather than explore rival meanings'. Davison (2000, pp.123-124), writes that Registers of National Estate and National Trust are still 'likely to reveal a strong bias towards grand buildings designed for wealthy clients by well-established architects'. Formal heritage listing must be made using objective criteria, applied with consistency. Outside experts may decide that buildings or places with significant meaning for local communities do not meet such 'objective' criteria. In response to these sorts of concerns, in 1992 the Australian Heritage Commission published a discussion paper on social value as a basis for heritage assessment (Johnston, 1992).

The Concept of Social Value

The 1992 social value discussion paper argued that 'communities of interest remain unrepresented' by experts and therefore remain outside the formally recognised heritage system. Professional specialists identify a limited range of places as heritage, tending to focus on standing structures and focus on architectural history (Johnston 1992, pp. 4-6). Johnston summarised social value as being 'collective attachment to places that embody

This is an author produced postprint of:
Leader-Elliott, L 2002. Changing Heritage, Changing Values, Memories of Two World Wars in the Barossa Valley. In D. Jones (ed.), '20th Century Heritage – Our recent Cultural Legacy', School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design and Australia ICOMOS Secretariat: Adelaide, 109-115.
Archived at Flinders University: dspace.flinders.edu.au

meanings important to a community' in the present. The range of places she suggested as having social value includes those that:

- 'help give a disempowered group back its history;
- provide an essential reference point in a community's identity or sense of itself…;
- provide an essential community function that over time develops into a deeper attachment that is more than utility value…;
- are accessible to the public and offer the possibility of repeated use to build up associations and value to the community of users; and
- places where people gather and act as a community' (Johnston, 1992, p7).

She notes that 'Memorials, as a class of places, are considered likely to be of social value' (p. 9).

For a place to be recognised as having social value, it should be apparent that a community has been attached to it continuously over time. However, because social value 'represents a current assessment of meaning for a community, such meaning is likely to be constantly redefined, reviewed and reiterated'. As communities change over time, places may lose their social value (pp. 16-17).

This need for ongoing community attachment and continuity of use poses problems for formal national heritage listing and conservation management. Architectural and historical criteria are much easier to define and apply. Johnston suggests that 'Social value is probably best protected by an informed and politically active community, with the support of legislation'. The key conservation issue may often be continuity of use and social access, 'perhaps with less concern about the intactness of the original fabric than with its continuing ability to evoke the associations and memories' (Johnston, 1992, p. 24).

These issues of social value as compared with architectural or aesthetic values are central to acknowledging the heritage value of World War I and World War II memorials to the communities of the Barossa Valley in South Australia. The ethnic base of the Barossa has a very strong German component, and the events of the two world wars had a bigger impact on these communities than any other event in the twentieth century. With one exception (listed for its design), none of the memorial structures erected after the wars has been accorded formal heritage status at State or national level. Architectural and aesthetic values, together with a focus on founding families, have held sway. It is only in 2001, through a local heritage survey commissioned by the local government authority, The Barossa Council, that local heritage listing (under the Development Act 1993) has been recommended for the remaining memorials.

The Barossa's German Community

Settlers of German cultural origin have formed a significant part of the Barossa's population since the first arrivals at Bethanien (Bethany) in 1842 and Langmeil in 1843. These settlers were from the Prussian provinces of Brandenburg, Posen and Silesia,

leaving their homeland seeking the freedom to worship according to the Old Lutheran liturgy (Munchenberg et al., 1992).

More German settlers arrived through the nineteenth century. By 1851, around half of those who had settled in South Australia had emigrated as religious communities, with the rest migrating for more general economic or social reasons. Many committed democrats emigrated after the failure of the 1848 revolutions in Germany. In the 1870s, many German immigrants were seeking to avoid conscription into the Prussian army. Chain migration was common, with new emigrants joining friends or relatives already here (Harmstorf and Cigler, 1985).

Tanunda emerged early as the major centre of German settlement. Angaston, in the foothills of the Barossa Ranges, had a population that was more English than German. Today there are four main Barossa towns (populations ranging from around 2,500 to 4,000) and a number of small settlements, each with at least one Lutheran Church.

A strong sense of community developed amongst these settlers, stemming from 'their Lutheran faith, their common language and culture'. The Lutheran churches ran Lutheran Schools where, at first, all teaching was in German. (German was still widely spoken in the Barossa into the middle decades of the twentieth century). While the Barossa Valley Germans were concerned to retain and safeguard their German heritage, they were also committed to their new life in Australia, and many took up British nationality within a few years of their arrival through naturalisation (Vondra, 1981, p. 56).

From the 1860s until the start of World War I in 1914, the German community in South Australia gradually gained in confidence and wealth and took a more active part in the political life and business life of the colony. The Germans and their descendants in 1914 were a highly regarded and valuable contributory group within South Australia. When Australia declared war on Germany in 1914, the secure world of the German community in South Australia fell apart. While those of German descent saw themselves as Australian, those of British descent saw themselves as British and the German settlers as aliens. Many South Australians 'saw everything culturally German as being unpatriotic to Australia'. (Harmstorf and Cigler, 1985, pp. 120-121).

As the war lengthened, attacks on the German community in South Australia increased. There were two attempts to take away voting rights from naturalised persons in SA (both were unsuccessful). There was discrimination in employment. All Lutheran schools were closed, as were German social clubs in Adelaide and Tanunda. Disunity within the German community itself meant that the War Precautions Act was often used to settle old scores (Harmstorf, 1994). Some leaders of the German community in South Australia were put under house arrest, houses were searched and men interned – 'often based only on a complaint from an informer which remained largely untested. …With the newspapers and politicians leading them, people hated everything German. … German culture and tradition were openly attacked.' (Harmstorf and Cigler, 1985, pp. 124-128).

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Many families changed or anglicised their German family names to avoid persecution. The then Governor of the State claimed that 'the German spy system has worked hard during the last century in this State to strengthen the chances of the Kaiser one day becoming the Ruler of Australia. The system of the nomenclature of towns was one of the methods employed. … The gradual process under which nearly 50 towns and districts received German names is a wonderful example of the system of peaceful penetration, in which method Germany has no rival' (Praite, 1989). In 1918, sixty nine German place names in South Australia were replaced by English ones – so that the Barossa's Kaiser Stuhl became Mount Kitchener and Siegersdorf became Dorrien. An attempt was made to burn down the Angaston Lutheran Church in 1915. It was completely destroyed by fire in 1941 (Loffler, 1988). Arson was widely suspected.

Despite this rejection, many young men of German descent joined the Australian armed forces and many died fighting against Germany. There is a mix of German and English names on the war memorials in all Barossa towns (Figure 1).

After World War I, it took several years for distrust to dissipate. By the late 1920s, church services were again being held in German. The Lutheran schools re-opened. In 1935 three German place names were reinstated for the Centenary of South Australia - Klemzig, Lobethal and Hahndorf. Another was reinstated in 1948 and sixteen more were restored in the 1970s and 1980s (Praite, 1989).

The outbreak of World War II did not bring the same widespread hatred as did World War I. Nevertheless, civil liberties were again suspended and Australians of German descent were again arrested and interned. Bureaucratic injustice, though practised, was not as prevalent or vicious as during the previous war (Harmstorf, 1994).

The wounds inflicted on the Barossa German community by the events of these two Wars were deep. As well as losing many of their young men, they had been made to feel that they were not accepted as part of Australian society. This was particularly the case after World War I. Memorials for those who had served their country and those who had died were erected with community support in each of the Barossa towns. They were, and remain, places with particular significance for the Barossa community. They are memorials to those who died, and they represent the commitment to Australia by the German descendants of the community in two wars against their country of origin. Yet only one of these memorials has been accorded heritage status.

Barossa War Memorials and Heritage listing.

The single heritage-listed memorial is Angaston's statue of the Archangel Michael. (Figure 2). A plaque on the statue's base records that it was 'erected by the people of Angaston in honour of the men from the district who served overseas in the Great War 1914 – 1918'.

A new plaque erected by the Angas family beside the statue in 2001 records that 'The bronze figure by noted sculptor Andrea Carlo Lucchesi (1860 – 1925) was the gift of

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Charles Angas. Two of Charles' sons served with British units in France. The elegant pedestal of pink Angaston marble set on the white steps was donated by public subscription'. The Angas family played important roles in the settlement of both South Australia and the Barossa, and are still major landholders in the Angaston district.

The South Australian Register Assessment Report notes the architectural significance of this memorial, which is unlike any other in design. Its historical significance is recorded as being a) a tribute to those who fought in World War I and b) its association with Charles Angas (Linn and Linn, 1990). This citation does not mention that the memorial also has a tribute to 'the Memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice World War II 1939-1945'. It is listed primarily because of its design and its association with the Angas family.

The Barossa Council recently commissioned a review of European heritage focussing on built heritage (McDougall and Vines, 2001). Its draft recommendations for places of local heritage value represent a significant shift from previous approaches to heritage listing in the Barossa – mostly nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings linked with settlement or the wine industry. McDougall and Vines' approach is more inclusive and conveys a wider understanding of place meaning. It looks beyond the earlier emphasis on design and association with a notable family to meanings linked with community identity and historical events which profoundly affected a minority ethnic group.

The draft proposals for places of local heritage significance include six war memorials. Four of the places proposed for listing are community halls, built as soldiers memorial halls after World War I (those in Eden Valley, Mount Pleasant, Nuriootpa and Tanunda) . Another, in Rowland Flat, thought to have been built originally as a school house, was transferred to the War Memorial Hall in 1967. The sixth, in Tanunda's main street, is a memorial to E.H. Coombe, MP, (Figure 3). Coombe represented the Barossa district in the State Parliament from 1901 to 1912. The plaque on his memorial says that his outspoken defense of the Barossa German community during the war 'made him the object of incessant persecution, probably precipitating his early death by cerebral hemorrhage in April 1917'.

McDougall and Vines identify for each place the applicable criteria for local heritage value. All the memorials are identified as demonstrating important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history. The Memorial Halls in Eden Valley, Mount Pleasant, Nuriootpa and Tanunda are identified as being outstanding representatives of a particular class of places of social significance. Eden Valley, Nuriootpa and Tanunda halls are identified as being associated with notable events – the World Wars. The Nuriootpa Soldiers Memorial Hall (Figure 4) is the most imposing of the halls, with its sandstone and grey marble face. It was built in 1925, replacing the old Institute building next door. Nuriootpa's honour boards for both wars hang in the vestibule.

The Tanunda Hall was originally built as a centre for community activities by the Tanunda Club and opened triumphantly in 1913. But by 1915 this German social Club was faltering under the weight of anti-German suspicion and its closure was forced by military authorities. In 1920 the Club hall was bought by the Tanunda Institute

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committee and was soon renamed the Memorial hall (Linn, 1991). It was used for band and choir concerts, dances and dramatic productions. It was extended in the 1950s as a memorial for those who served in World War II. The extensions added cream brick meeting rooms and a foyer on the front of the 1920s hall. The materials and proportions of this extension substantially altered the appearance of the building (Figure 5), and have been at least partially responsible for it not being listed in the past.

Honour boards listing the names of those who served in both wars are prominently displayed in the Tanunda Soldiers' Memorial Hall foyer. The Hall has been managed by a community committee which reports to the local council. Use of the hall for entertainment and social functions has declined steadily over the last few years, partly because community social activities have changed and partly because new venues have opened in the last five years. Since 1997 there have been extensive negotiations between the Arts Council, the Barossa Wine and Tourism Association, the SM Hall Committee, the Council and other groups, with the intention of converting the Hall to a regional art gallery. For the Hall Committee and the Returned Services League, the placement of the honour boards has been a major issue. They would not consent to changes in use or design unless the boards remained in their present place in the foyer. Suggestions that the cream brick extension be removed were flatly vetoed. As at October 2001, the new gallery plans include a mezzanine floor in the foyer to form a Memorial Gallery to accommodate and give prominence to the honour boards.

In contrast with the relative continuity of architectural value, social value must be constantly renegotiated. In the process, living associations between community and heritage are both created and retained. The memory of old conflicts persists, while new conflicts are generated.

Conclusion

The two World Wars had enormous impact on the communities of the Barossa, with German descendants being persecuted and ostracised from the wider society to which they had felt they belonged. The war memorials built in the 1920s symbolised the Barossa communities' place as loyal Australian citizens as well as mourning the loss of life of young men from both German and English backgrounds. Post World War II alterations made in the 1950s to two of the memorial halls added depth to their historical associations and cultural meaning within their communities. However, the alterations were architecturally unsympathetic and compromised the integrity of the original structures in ways that made their listing unlikely on architectural or aesthetic grounds.

Past decisions on listing Barossa memorials have been dominated by architectural considerations and association with notable families. Expanded concepts of cultural heritage over the last thirty years have not been reflected in State and National heritage listings of Barossa World War heritage.

The Barossa memorials meet social value criteria relating to community identity: they are accessible; repeated community use has built up associations and value amongst the

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community, leading to a deeper attachment that is more than utility value. The nature of the activities taking place in the Memorial Halls has changed since the 1920s and continues to change. Communities remain attached to the halls and concerned that they remain in active community use. In Tanunda, commitment to the Hall's purpose as a soldier's memorial is clearly demonstrated by demands that adaptation of the building for a regional gallery retain the unsympathetic 1950s frontage and incorporate the World War honour boards.

Cotter et al (2001, p.3) contend that 'while formal cultural heritage management is largely driven by state and national legislation, the reality of managing cultural places and heritage lies at the local level' and therefore with local government and communities. The war memorials of the Barossa are cared for at local level. Formal local heritage listing will acknowledge their historical and cultural importance to the community and provide a mechanism for conservation and management through the Development Plan.

Incorporating social value into formal cultural heritage assessment and listing processes compounds its complexity. Yet it is essential that evolving wider views of cultural heritage are incorporated into heritage practice and formal recognition of heritage values. The heritage of conflict and alienation must be acknowledged for the less powerful as well as the more powerful. And events shaping community identity deserve at least the same attention as aesthetics.

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Photographs and captions

Figure 1. German surnames outnumber the English on this Tanunda war memorial monument.

Figure 2 Angaston's heritage-listed war memorial. The Archangel Michael: Right victorious over Might..

Figure 3 Memorial to E.H. Coombe, defender of the Barossa German community in World War I.

Figure 4 Nuriootpa Soldiers Memorial Hall, built 1925 to commemorate the service of local residents in World War I.

Figure 5 Tanunda Soldiers Memorial Hall. 1950s cream brick extensions were a World War II memorial.

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