

# HERITAGE INFORMATION SERIES

## HISTORICAL RESEARCH FOR HERITAGE



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This information sheet is based on a paper prepared by Heritage Office historian, Bruce Baskerville.

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Aboriginal hand stencils, South Coast. Photograph courtesy of National Parks and Wildlife Service  
Interior of Belltrees shearing shed, built near Scone in NSW in 1879 by architect J. Horbury Hunt.  
Artefacts from the site of first Government House Archaeology Collection. Photograph courtesy of Museum of Sydney on the site of first Government House  
Grose Valley, Blue Mountains, NSW. Photograph courtesy of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

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Australia Square, Sydney  
Entrance to the central temple, Sze Yup Temple, Glebe. Photograph by Karl Zhao  
Lands Department Building, Sydney  
The bow of iron steamer, Merimbula, wrecked near Currarong in 1928. Photograph by David Nutley  
Snowy Mountains Scheme. Photograph courtesy of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority  
St Mark's Anglican Church, Darling Point, Sydney. Photograph by Stuart Humphreys  
Belltrees Shearing Shed, near Scone, NSW.  
Detail from the crypt floor of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Photograph courtesy of St Mary's Cathedral

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>HISTORY IN HERITAGE WORK</b>		
1.1 WHAT IS THEMATIC HISTORY?	2	
1.2 WHAT SORT OF QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED?	3	
1.3 WHO SHOULD UNDERTAKE HISTORICAL RESEARCH	3	
1.4 WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A THEMATIC HISTORY	4	
1.5 CHECKING THE HISTORIAN'S WORK	5	
1.6 TELLING THE STORY	6	
<b>HOW TO RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE</b>	<b>7</b>	
2.1 HOUSE HISTORY IN THE SYDNEY REGION	7	
2.2 HOUSE HISTORY IN COUNTRY NSW	10	
<b>A GENERAL GUIDE TO SOURCES IN NSW</b>	<b>13</b>	
3.1 LOCAL RECORDS	13	
3.2 LOCAL LIBRARY	15	
3.3 LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES	15	
3.4 LOCAL PUBLICATIONS	16	
3.5 STATE AGENCIES - STATE RECORDS	16	
3.6 STATE AGENCIES – BIRTH, DEATHS & MARRIAGES	17	
3.7 STATE AGENCIES – MITCHELL LIBRARY	17	
3.8 STATE AGENCIES – LAND TITLES OFFICE	18	
3.9 STATE AGENCIES – GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES BOARD	19	
3.10 STATE AGENCIES – NSW GOVERNMENT GAZETTE	19	
3.11 COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES – NATIONAL ARCHIVE	20	
3.12 COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES – NATIONAL LIBRARY	20	
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>SOME USEFUL REFERENCES</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>HISTORICAL THEMES</b>	<b>24</b>



## INTRODUCTION

### *Heritage is evidence of our history*

Heritage history is a general term for historical research and writing that is useful in heritage work. It is usually presented in the form of a thematic history, but other forms such as sequential occupation or architectural classification are frequently used. Heritage history is distinguished from many other forms of history writing by the fact that both documentary evidence and physical evidence are gathered and analysed.

Traditionally historians have worked from paper-based evidence, especially written documents, but many historians now subscribe to one of the late Professor Manning Clark's dictums: a historian should be equipped with a good notebook and a stout pair of boots. This is particularly appropriate for historical work for heritage as the research 'documents' are not only found in the archives but also in "bricks and mortar". In other words, we can find evidence of our past by learning to 'read' the physical and cultural environments in which we live.

These guidelines are a general introduction to the use of history in heritage work. They will be of interest to heritage professionals working in the field, as well as owners of heritage places, community historians or anyone simply interested in finding out about the history of a place.

Chapter 1: 'History in Heritage Work' is a useful overview of how history is used in the management of heritage places. This will be particularly relevant to those preparing a heritage report or conservation plan.

Chapter 2: 'How to Research the History of Your House' provides practical guidance on historical research for anyone interested in researching the history of their house. Advice on the types of questions to ask and pointers to the records and information that can provide the answers will help the new researcher get started.

Chapter 3: 'A General Guide to Sources in NSW' explains what records will be useful for historical research and where to find them. It has a particular focus on records available via the Internet.

# 1. HISTORY IN HERITAGE WORK

## 1.1 WHAT IS THEMATIC HISTORY?

History can be researched and written in many different ways, for example, biography, genealogy, social history, military history, environmental history or even the historical novel. **Thematic history** is a method of researching and writing history that is most useful for heritage work.

The historical development of an area or item can be understood as occurring in a thematic way. A physical illustration of this can be seen when we think about a landscape or building or arrangement of artefacts as a series of layers, each one representing a progressively earlier or later theme, or historical influence. Thinking about a place in terms of themes can help us to understand its significance.

A set of 36 State Historical Themes have been developed for New South Wales, as well as a set of nine National Historical Themes (attached as Appendix B). These provide complimentary thematic frameworks for use at the state and national levels. Local themes are usually developed as sub-themes of the State themes in local and site-specific heritage and conservation studies.

Notice that the themes are not strictly chronological. They are not neatly divided into distinct decades or years; there is scope for overlap. More than one theme can be in evidence at a given time on a particular site or within a particular area. For example, during the 1910s/20s, a number of houses were privately built in North Parramatta as rental accommodation, especially for employees at the government institutions in the area. The themes of Housing, Government & Administration and possibly Persons could be used to provide an understanding of the historical significance of these houses.

The use of themes helps the historian to consider all periods in the history of an item or area in a heritage study or conservation management plan, not just the most obvious ones. Themes provide the framework for identifying and assessing the remaining physical evidence for each theme on a site or within an area.

## 1.2 WHAT SORT OF QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED?

Historical research and writing always begin with a question that is asked in the present. In heritage work, this usually means questions such as:

- When was this house built?
- Why was this garden designed using these plant species?
- What is that pile of rocks located in that paddock?
- How did these old wharves function?
- We know that Francis Greenway designed it – what else matters?
- It's a real mystery why this museum has a collection of 1920s geological specimens, why have they been collected?

It is important to remember that apparently random events or processes in the past can be situated within historical patterns. It is the role of a historian to describe and analyse those patterns and so provide a context for the artefact or event. This will lead to a historical understanding which can help us to define what is significant about an item.

## 1.3 WHO SHOULD UNDERTAKE HISTORICAL RESEARCH FOR HERITAGE?

### 'Horses for courses'

Research on a place or building can, and often is, undertaken by a variety of professions, often architects and archaeologists and sometimes planners. However if the research is needed for a heritage study or conservation plan, the best person to undertake that research is a professional historian.

Community historians also undertake much research, and are often very knowledgeable about sources and repositories for heritage research. However, it must be remembered that research data needs to be analysed in order to be useful. Not all the data will be relevant or of use in a heritage history. Some may be useful, but its utility may need to be drawn out and placed within a context – preferably a thematic context.

A professional historian working in the heritage field will have the experience to discriminate between data that is interesting and data that is useful. Everything has a past, but not everything in that past is significant. One of the skills of a professional historian is in making that distinction. It is therefore a good idea to consult a professional historian when analysis or assessment of information is needed, particularly if it is required for a conservation management plan or heritage study.

#### 1.4 WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A THEMATIC HISTORY?

The contents of a thematic history will vary according to the characteristics of the place or area, but generally could be expected to include some or all of the following:

- **Description:** the history should include some description of both the physical elements (former and existing) and the systems or processes of the place (e.g. how a farm operated, how work flowed around a factory, the social structures within a mansion).
- **Context:** a context for the item should be explained (e.g. trade patterns and boat building techniques for a shipwreck, illegal activities and law enforcement policies and patterns for a jail, land laws and settlement patterns for a farm complex, or the overall body of work of an architect for an architecturally significant building).
- **Comparison:** similar types of items should be identified to allow for some comparison (eg. for a corner shop, other corner shops or retail areas; for a golf club house other golf or sports club houses – the comparison should be by type as well as by function and by period of usage – by whatever characteristics make a place significant - a 1950s brick warehouse at Chullora is unlikely to be comparable with a 1860s timber warehouse in Newcastle, although they would both illustrate different periods in warehousing – potential State themes of Commerce, Labour and Transport).
- **Prediction:** if the State theme of Mining is used for an area the history should be able to predict that certain types of mining structures from a certain period are likely to be found at particular sites in the area (e.g. the Chinese Thematic History, using the State theme of Fishing, predicts that there may be physical evidence of the 19th century Chinese fishing industry in NSW at Swansea, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Coila Lake – this has yet to be tested).
- **Demonstration:** A place or area must be able to demonstrate, in the surviving physical fabric, the historical themes claimed to be significant (e.g. the Shea's Creek Woolsheds in Alexandria are historically significant as examples of temporary war-time wool storage facilities – this is demonstrated in their prefabricated, light-weight structure that was designed according to the dimensions of a wool bale in the 1940s).
- **Association:** this is quite complex – the fact that Henry Parkes owned a house in Faulconbridge or in Annandale does not automatically make it significant because of that – the history must establish that Henry Parkes is a significant person in the history of NSW, and that his association with the house is in some way significant – e.g. he wrote his major speeches favouring federation while living there, and no other places where he devoted as much time and attention to this significant topic survives.

## 1.5 CHECKING THE HISTORIAN'S WORK

A well-prepared piece of historical research is the first step in managing and conserving a heritage place. The following is a check list of elements that should be covered in the history:

- the historical information cited should be verifiable. The usual way to do this is to provide a reference or footnote for each piece of evidence to distinguish it from an interpretation or analysis of the evidence. At the very least, a list of the references that were used should be attached;
- key pieces of evidence, especially plans or diagrams, should be reproduced in the report;
- there should be a logical and readable flow to the text – i.e. it should make sense;
- if the history is claimed to be a thematic history, then there should be clear headings and subheadings identifying the themes used, and a concluding paragraph to each theme or sub-theme identifying the physical evidence that demonstrates the theme or sub-theme;
- the key sources used in a place history will vary from place to place and depend upon the survival of evidence. As a general guideline, check that rate book references, DA/BA documents and directory listings have been consulted to provide some basic data;
- historic illustrations such as photographs or drawings, and any maps or diagrams should be included. Service diagrams (water, sewerage) and graphics from local library and historical society collections are possible sources;
- if persons are particularly important, biographical data from the period when they were associated with the place should be included e.g. birth/death years established from the Index to Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, information from rate books and street directory references.
- for context, some understanding of the local land tenure and subdivision processes (rural and urban) could be included. This can be gained from land title records and local council records relating to new road constructions and service provision as well as subdivision posters and advertisements;
- place name patterns should be identified and analysed, with periods of naming being linked to historical themes and environmental evidence.

## **1.6 TELLING THE STORY**

A good historian is a good story teller – a dry chronological recitation in the manner of ‘1066 and all that’ will neither enthuse a reader nor contribute to determining the significance of an item or place. This can be a challenge in history for heritage, as either the technical nature of the work can seem to exclude any room for creativity, or the joy of telling the story can overcome the necessary attention to detail.

History consists of research, analysis and story – obtaining a balance between these components is always a challenge, and even more so in heritage work. There is little training for historians in university history departments in the specialities of heritage work – it generally has to be learnt on the job. Continuing education for historians, as well as for people who use historical research and analysis, is therefore crucial to ensuring that history remains one of the ‘core’ disciplines in heritage work.

## **2. HOW TO RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE**

A frequently-asked question of people contacting the Heritage Office is: “How do I find out about the history of my house?” For those who live in heritage-listed houses or homes from an earlier era, finding out about the history of the place can add to its significance and appeal, as well as being an important step when undertaking conservation work.

It is important to understand that it is unlikely that someone will have already researched, written and published the history of your house and that it can be easily found in a bookshop or library. It is much more likely that you will need to do the research and writing yourself.

The first point, then, is to ask the question, “Why am I doing this?” Do you want to undertake some conservation or renovation works that will retain the historic character of the house. Is it for a school research project? Is it because you are interested in knowing the house’s history? Why you are researching your house history will help guide you to certain records and information.

### **2.1 ‘HOUSE HISTORY’ IN THE SYDNEY REGION**

Wherever you live in the Sydney region there are several basic sources that will probably be available for your area.

The first of these is the house itself. Reading a building is a skill that can be learnt with a little patience. Walk all around and through the building, noting the different materials used, and look for any filled-in or new doors or windows, removed chimneys, fireplaces, internal walls and verandahs. Note any footings, foundations or filled-in wells for archaeological evidence of earlier structures.

The various materials can be roughly dated, e.g corrugated iron became widespread from the 1870s/80s, casement (side-hung) windows in the 1910s, fibro walls from the 1940s. The style or styles used can also help to date parts of a house. The two standard publications for identifying styles are *Identifying Australian Architecture* (1989) by Richard Apperley et al, and *Australian House Styles* (1997) by M. & I. Stapleton, both available from bookshops and libraries.

Don’t forget to note the garden or yard – can you see evidence of earlier layouts, such as paths and garden beds? Try and list the tree and other plant species to see if they date from particular periods. Neighbours and other local residents may also recall information or stories about the house and its earlier residents that may be useful in your research.

It is always useful at this stage to make a rough sketch plan showing what you have observed from your ‘reading’, and noting the questions that documentary

research should help you to answer.

The City of Sydney was created in 1842. Local councils were established across the metropolitan area between 1858 and 1906. Council records useful for house histories are rate books and development application (DA) and building application (BA) records. Rate books record information about the owner, type of building and valuations, and are updated every 3-4 years. DA (from 1945) and BA (from 1909) records show building plans and various documents associated with the approvals process. Inquiries should, initially, be directed to the local studies librarian for your Council area.

Other useful records that may be held in the local studies collection will include photographs and drawings that may include your house, or oral histories and interviews conducted with past residents that refer to your house. Local newspapers and magazines could include stories about the house or former residents. It is important to remember, however, that many council and local records have been destroyed or lost over the years, and coverage will often be uneven. The library can only collect what has survived.

The State and Mitchell libraries also contain many useful resources. The most commonly used is the Sands Directory, which was produced annually from 1858 to 1932/33. It lists residents by street addresses and can help you to work out when a house was built, and who has occupied it. Subdivision posters can show when your house block was first made and when it was sold as part of an estate subdivision. Extensive collections of photographs, drawings, newspapers, magazines, maps and plans are also held.

The libraries of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Society of Australian Genealogists hold similar extensive collections of local histories, family histories, photographs, memoirs and reminiscences, and can also provide useful tips and information on other sources.

The Land Titles Office holds records for all legal land transactions in NSW under the Torrens Title system (introduced in 1863) and many under the common law or 'Old' system (since the 1790s). These records are about land, rather than buildings, but can be very useful in determining earlier ownership of a house. Inquiries should initially be directed to the Historical Officer, (02) 9228 6666.

Another useful source is the Metropolitan Detail Plans compiled by the Water Board from the 1880s to the 1940s to show sewerage and water connections to individual properties. Finding a plan that shows your house will depend upon when your area was first sewered and connected to reticulated water. Initial inquiries should be directed to the Historical Officer at Australian Water Technologies (the trading arm of Sydney Water) on (02) 9334 0238. Some of these plans are also available in local studies collections and at the Mitchell Library.

You should also seek out advertisements in local papers and sponsored local histories. Sales of larger properties, especially on the urban fringes with subdivision potential are often advertised in some detail, as are many commercial buildings. Advertisements for new apartment or flat buildings will generally include illustrations, sometimes including interiors. The advent of the motor car after World War I resulted in many publications extolling the virtues of motor travel in the then outer metropolitan areas and often include illustrated advertisements for guest houses, hotels, motor garages, shops and restaurants. Close attention should be paid to advertisements for information they can reveal about buildings, landscape types and materials available at a particular period. Many suburban newspapers are held in local studies collections and at the Mitchell Library.

There is an extensive network of local historical societies across the metropolitan area. The CBD is probably the only area not covered by a local society. Some societies maintain local archives and/or a local museum, and have extensive collections of materials including documents, photographs and artefacts. It is important to remember that the societies are voluntary cultural organisations. Care should be taken when handling their records, and payment of a fee of some sort should always be offered to help with the conservation of these materials.

These are the types of records created over the years that will be most useful for researching a house history in Sydney. Not all of these records will be useful for every house, and there will also be other records for certain types of houses (e.g. former Housing Commission houses). The ever increasing array of indexes and guides to records in State and Commonwealth archives available via the Internet should also be thoroughly explored. It is important to remember that a house history should cover the whole period of its existence, not just when it was built.

## 2.2 HOUSE HISTORY IN COUNTRY NEW SOUTH WALES

Researching the history of your house in regional New South Wales will mean using somewhat different approaches and different records to those used in the metropolitan area, as well as asking some different questions.

The first source to use, as always, is the house. Where is it located – in a valley, on a hill, beside a river; on a farm, in the forest, or in town? Why is it located in that particular place – to escape flooding, to be close to work, to take advantage of a view? What materials is it made from – brick, timber slabs, weatherboard, fibro, corrugated iron or some combination of these? Is there any obvious archaeological evidence, such as exposed foundations, or ruined or overgrown structures such as walls, wells and cellars? Are the materials locally available, or were they brought in from elsewhere? Materials manufactured in Sydney or overseas are unlikely to be found in a house that pre-dates the development of good transport links, such as the railway, so itemising the materials can help to date the house. Their materials can also tentatively date additions and alterations at later periods.

Styles can also help to date a house, but it is important to remember that style periods can lag several years and even decades behind their use in Sydney, and so some adjustment needs to be made to the date ranges provided in publications such as Richard Apperley et al's *Identifying Australian Architecture* (1989) and M. & I. Stapleton's *Australian House Styles* (1997).

Evidence of earlier garden plantings and arrangements should be looked for, such as fences, paths, garden beds and avenues or clumps of trees. With large rural properties these plantings may extend along roads or tracks and around working yards and sheds, and they may show evidence of successive plantings over time.

It is always useful at this stage to make a rough sketch plan showing what you have observed from your 'reading', and noting the questions that documentary research should help you to answer.

Another factor to consider is the quite common practise of relocating and/or reconstructing country houses, especially those made of timber. There may be rows of nail holes, unpainted areas and other indicators that the structure has been rebuilt. Oral histories and old photographs may help to identify these buildings. In a similar mode is the frequent use of kit or prefabricated homes, often made by Sydney firms such as Hudson Brothers around the turn of the century, and widely erected across country areas of the State.

The establishment of local government in country areas varies between the 1860s and 1870s, when many municipalities were formed around the larger towns and provincial cities, and 1907 when shires were formed across the

Eastern and Central Land Divisions. The most common local council records that will be useful are rate books and building application (BA) or development application (DA) records. The coverage of these records is uneven because of fires, floods, insects and neglect over the years, but even so many do survive. There are rate books for cities such as Orange from 1860, for Armidale from 1878 and for Wagga Wagga from 1870; as well as for small shires that no longer exist, such as Tomki 1908-1975, Cowcumballa 1907-1922 and Cudgegong 1924-1975. BA (from 1909) and DA (from 1945) records survive to varying degrees in different council areas.

Rural councils were also responsible for providing many services such as water, sewerage, drainage, electricity and gas from varying dates, often early in the 20th century. These sorts of council records can provide information on the value of land, descriptions of structures, building plans, and plans for the connections for various services. In the first instance, the house researcher should contact their local studies or local history library for the availability of council records.

County councils began to be established from the mid-1920s to provide electricity, water, gas, flood protection, noxious weed control and other purposes to groups of local councils. The county councils generated their own series of records similar to the service records of local councils, and can be of great use to house historians. Unfortunately, their records can be difficult to locate and inquiries should be made to local studies libraries and State Records (formerly the Archives Office) in Sydney. These county districts should not be confused with the counties used in land title descriptions.

Advertisements in local papers and sponsored local histories are of great use to house historians. Sales of medium to large rural properties are often advertised in some detail with building descriptions and photographs in local, trade and agricultural newspapers. Commemorative histories and tourist publications from the 1920s onwards often include a wealth of illustrated advertisements for a diverse range of local commercial enterprises, including guest houses, hotels, motor garages, shops of all types and builders' suppliers. Discerning reading of these advertisements can reveal many details about particular buildings as well as types of materials and uses that could be expected in certain periods and places.

Land title documents are much less frequently used in researching country houses than in Sydney because of the centralised location of the Land Titles Office. However, many land documents, such as lease agreements, will survive, often in local studies or historical society collections and State Records regional repositories, and it is worth taking some time to go through such collections.

Reference has already been made to local studies/history sections in local libraries. The other main source of information in country areas will be historical society collections. Many societies maintain local archives, and others run local

museums. Each can be a treasure trove of documents, illustrations and recollections for the house historian. It is important to remember that the societies are voluntary cultural organisations. Care should be taken when handling their records, and payment of a fee of some sort should always be offered to help with the conservation of these materials.

Researching a house history in a country area is different to a similar project in the Sydney area. But the principles of 'reading' the building and its setting, using local council records where possible, becoming familiar with local studies/history sections and local historical societies remain the same, as well as taking the time to talk with residents who may have detailed memories of a house, and making maximum use of State and Commonwealth archives available via the Internet.

### **3. A GENERAL GUIDE TO SOURCES IN NSW**

#### **3.1 LOCAL COUNCIL RECORDS**

Since its establishment your own local council has generated a series of records that can be used for research purposes.

##### **Building and Development Applications**

- Principal among these are BA and DA records. BA records will theoretically date from about 1909 and DA records from about 1945, and include plans, drawings and application and approval details. The extent of the archiving of these records, however, varies widely from council to council. Some, such as North Sydney, retain complete applications and approvals from 1911; others such as Ashfield retain the registers from c.1910, but only retain the files from c.1940; and yet others have either retained very little or have lost much of what they did retain to floods, fires, insects, etc.
- It would be a useful exercise to make yourself familiar with the range of BA and DA records that survive for your council, the location of these records, and their access conditions.

##### **Rate Books**

- 'Rate books' is a general term used to describe a number of types of records created to describe and assess land for the purposes of rating it and recording the payments of these rates. Information such as owners and occupier's names, basic descriptions of buildings, dimensions of land and legal land descriptions are typically recorded (but this varies), as well as the monetary and rateable value of the land.
- For details relating to your area, refer to Hughes, J., (ed) *Local Government...Local History: a Guide to NSW Local Government Minute Books and Rate Records*, Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney 1990.

##### **Minute Books**

- Council minute books can also be useful. Often, earlier BA approvals were recorded in the minutes, which can sometimes be the only surviving record of such applications. Obviously, they will be of lesser detail than the applications, but they may still sometimes provide the only documentary clue to when or where certain building works occurred.
- Minute books can also record when decisions were made to make new roads, provide new council facilities such as baby care centres or libraries

or depots or to upgrade or remodel parks, recreation grounds and so on.

- The main difficulty with minute books will often be a lack of indexing, or a system of indexing so brief or so complex that searching is still quite difficult. You will often need to try and think like a council clerk of the period to determine the best way to access minute book information.
- Refer to Hughes (1990) for details of your area.

### **Service Records**

- Local councils were often the original providers of services such as reticulated water, sewerage, drainage and electricity. Although these functions were taken over by statutory boards in the metropolitan area during the later 19th century, in country areas they remained a municipal responsibility for many years, and in some cases still do.
- There is little published material available as a guide to these records, although this may vary in some council areas. Again, make yourself familiar with the range of these records that may survive for your council.
- Such records can provide outline plans of structures at particular points in time, as well as provide details of various service lines.

### **Commons Records**

- Commons were a notable feature of New South Wales landscapes during much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Trustees were appointed or elected to manage commons, and many of their records have been retained by local councils – mainly because local councils increasingly became commons trustees.
- Useful commons records include lists of commoners (i.e. people within a certain area that had rights to use a common), and statistics on common activities, such as grazing, gathering firewood and extracting clay for brickmaking. These statistics can help to chart changes to a landscape over time. Common boundaries often changed as well, and boundary descriptions can help to understand broader changes in a local landscape.

### **3.2 LOCAL LIBRARY – LOCAL STUDIES/LOCAL HISTORY SECTION**

You should make it a priority to get to know the local studies or local history librarian in your Council's local library (if it has one). The local library often functions as the *de facto* council archives and will often contain much of the archival materials created by a local council. The librarians will be knowledgeable about this resource and will be able to identify useful records. It will depend upon what you are looking for as to which records may be of use.

As well as council records, local library collections may also contain copies of all the published or manuscript local histories, they may have a historic photographs collection, a collection of local newspapers and magazines, maps and plans, and collections of ephemera such as local advertising materials, sporting paraphernalia, etc. Many local libraries will contain *Sands Directory* on microfiche (especially useful for the metropolitan area) or other directories or almanacs covering country areas such as *Grevilles Directory*, *NSW Post Office Directory* and *NSW Pastoral Directory*. Collections of local telephone books can also be useful, although not always as useful as directories for place research.

### **3.3 LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**

There are some 270 local historical societies across NSW, so it is likely that there is at least one operating in your local community. Most historical societies collect, document and operate either a museum and other movable heritage items/or a research room. Their research materials can often cover a similar range of items as outlined for local history libraries, but will probably include more personal materials such as diaries, journals, account books, and family photo albums and bibles – all useful in researching the history of a place. Local museums can also contain much documentary research material, as well as movables and contents that may be associated with a place you are researching, such as furnishings, machinery, tools and diverse other materials.

It is important to remember when using historical society resources that the societies are entirely voluntary in their management and membership and may not always apply the same conservation standards to their collections that you might think appropriate, although this is improving. It is always useful to offer to pay for any research fees or copying charges as a contribution towards their conservation costs, even if they do not ask for it. It is also useful to ask about the provenance of any materials that you may want to use, as this may provide additional information relating to the place or artefact you are researching.

### **3.4 LOCAL PUBLICATIONS**

The publication of commemorative and jubilee histories for council areas and for local institutions such as churches, sporting clubs, social and welfare groups, and for events such as explorations, battles and famous identities, is a long established practise.

The content of such publications can be very useful, although if it is not referenced in any way, it is wise to treat it with some caution. Sponsored local publications will generally be replete with local advertisements, and it is useful to read these closely for what they say about the facilities, expertise and materials available (or not available) in a community at a point in time.

### **3.5 STATE AGENCIES: STATE RECORDS (FORMERLY STATE ARCHIVES)**

Local government has been an accepted part of colonial/state government since 1842, and more comprehensively since 1906. State agencies have also regulated many aspects of local environments that may now provide useful historical records. State Records (formerly the NSW Archives Office) is the principal repository for records created by State agencies, and has search rooms in the Rocks and Kingswood in the metropolitan area, as well as a network of Regional Repositories in country NSW including Armidale, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong and Broken Hill.

Some very brief examples of the types of records conserved by State Records that may be useful in place research:

#### **Department of Local Government**

- County Council Annual Reports c.1928-1965;
- Schedules of land held under crown leases in each shire, 1920s – includes lease details, rentals, some maps and diagrams of the leases;
- Sutherland Shire Council Building Applications 1942 – includes building plans, application details, impacts on war controls.

#### **Soil Conservation Service**

- Survey Branch Records Field Books 1940-1979 – include measurements and rough sketches of foreshores, individual land holdings, etc.
- Hunter Valley Conservation Trust minutes and proceedings 1953-1968 – includes maps, pictures, reports on flood mitigation works to properties and areas.

### **Colonial/Chief Secretary's Office, State Fisheries Branch**

- Registers of Oyster Leases, 1899-1954 – variable information, but can include plans, maps and descriptions of lease areas and structures as well as other details.

### **Department of Agriculture**

- Local and District War Agriculture Committees 1942-1946 – correspondence, circulars and files of the 52 district committees and 1500 local committees – established to provide for fair distribution of manpower and resources to farms.

For more detail search State Records Concise Guide at:  
[www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au)

### **3.6 STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES**

Another useful avenue within the State sphere is the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The indexes to baptisms, marriages and burials (pre 1856) and births, marriages and deaths (post 1856) are searchable via the Internet between 1788 and 1918 for baptisms/births, burials/deaths and marriages, and 1919 and 1945 for deaths and marriages.

These indexes can be searched in ten year blocks and should help to confirm whether a person was alive at a particular time, help to distinguish between persons of the same name and period, and other basic details concerning a claim about a personal association with a place.

The indexes can be searched at: [www.bdm.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au)

### **3.7 STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: MITCHELL LIBRARY**

A readily available source of illustrations is the collection of images held by the State Library. Many of these have been digitised and are available via the Internet on a database called Picman. This contains all images and manuscripts added to the Mitchell and Dixson collections since 1992 and is relatively easy to search.

The Mitchell Library generally contains a vast amount of research material in its collections. Illustrations can also be found in the Small Picture Files, and the Government Printers Office videodiscs. Series of Water Board detail plans are available for the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, mainly covering the CBD and inner city areas. There is an extensive collection of subdivision posters covering much of the

state, mostly from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is a good collection of parish and other maps from all periods.

Apart from Picman, other collections accessible via the Internet include Webcat, which contains all published item catalogued since 1980, such as books, periodicals, newspapers and videos, and a guide to the library's manuscript collections.

Picman, Webcat and other guides be searched at [www.slsw.gov.au](http://www.slsw.gov.au)

### **3.8 STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: LAND TITLES OFFICE**

Land title information can be very useful in place history research. However, if you are beyond the Sydney CBD area, access can be difficult. The Land Titles Office has a website that allows a certain amount of searching – however, the search results cannot be viewed, and will instead be printed out at the LTO – you will need to have an arrangement with the LTO to collect and pay for this information. Visiting the LTO can be very productive. Publicly available indexes and documents include a Torrens Title Purchasers Index from 1863, a Crown Lands Information Database, an Index to Old Registers 1802-1825 and Bound Volumes 1000 to 8379 of Torrens Titles.

A regular series of workshops is conducted by the LTO and RAHS for access to LTO records. A researcher who has not used the LTO is strongly advised to contact the Historical Officer (02) 9228 6629 before arranging to visit the office.

Researchers should note that parcels of land are often described as being in a parish and county (e.g. parish Lett, county Cook). NSW is divided into 141 counties, and the counties are subdivided into over 7000 parishes. These parishes are used for civil purposes such as land description, and should not be confused with church parishes, just as these counties should not be confused with the county councils that formed a level of regional governance between the 1920s and 1970s.

LTO can be reached at [www.lto.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lto.nsw.gov.au) and an example of a search provider can be found at: [www.natdata.net/services/LTO](http://www.natdata.net/services/LTO)

### **3.9 STATE AGENCIES: GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES BOARD**

Attention should be paid to place name patterns for their ability to demonstrate changing generational and cultural patterns of land use in an area. Not all place names in an area date from the same period. Changing values become inscribed on a landscape through successive place name patterns, and one locality can exhibit place names from several different historical periods including anglicised Aboriginal names. Understanding these patterns can help in determining local historical themes for an area. Similarly, patterns of street names in urban areas can point to varying periods and influences in the formation of subdivisions.

House names have been more popular in some periods than others. In urban areas house names were important before street numbering began, and there is often widespread use of particular names at certain times, such as 'Waratah' and 'Kia-Ora' in the federation period. In country areas, farm and station names tend to be less generic and more site based, such as 'Mountain View' or 'Fort Grey'. Building names can be indicative of social values, and even if historical research indicates that a name such as 'The Coaching House' is descriptively inaccurate, such a commonly-accepted name points to a certain level of community esteem for a place.

Information on place name origins and history can be obtained from the Geographical Names Board's Geographical Names Register, containing over 80,000 place names in New South Wales. This can be accessed at: [www.lpi.gov.au](http://www.lpi.gov.au)

### **3.10 STATE AGENCIES: NSW GOVERNMENT GAZETTE**

The *NSW Government Gazette* has been published continually since March 1832, and was preceded by the *Sydney Gazette* that began publication in 1803. The Gazettes carry a huge array of official notices, including references to land grants, leases, licenses to carry out public functions, appointments of public officials and calling for and notifying acceptance of tenders. Volumes are indexed, but indexing methods change periodically and some patience is needed in using them. The Mitchell Library contains a complete set of the Gazette up to the present day, but this can only be accessed by visiting the Library.

Further information about the Gazette can be obtained from [www.qps.dpws.nsw.gov.au](http://www.qps.dpws.nsw.gov.au)

### **3.11 COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES: NATIONAL ARCHIVES (FORMERLY AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES)**

The National Archives has offices in each capital city, with certain collections of records being held at each of these offices. The Archives has an extensive photographic collection dating from the 1850s. A series of Fact Sheets can be consulted about a variety of subjects. The most useful for place research are probably Building, Design & Construction, Public Health, Science & the Environment, Trade, Industry & the Economy, Transport & Communications and Defence, Armed Services & War.

Indexes to the Archives collections are easily accessible via the Internet, and can be searched by several methods. Perhaps the easiest is ANGAM, in which over 2 million items are described, with an average of 250 000 items being added each year. It is possible to search by a place name or persons name and find a great variety of material. Records relating to places controlled at some stage by the Commonwealth include post offices, customs houses, quarantine stations and military facilities, as well as their associated housing and accommodation facilities.

The address is: [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)

### **3.12 COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA**

The National Library holds some collections of use in place research. It has a complete set of *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* from 1901, and its subsequent series from 1974. The gazettes contain official notices such as land acquisitions, disposals, transfers and leasings, and various company references. There are annual indexes to the gazettes. Both the National Library and the National Archives have guides to the gazettes. The National Library can be accessed via the Internet at: [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)

A recent addition that is of use in place research has been the digitisation of periodicals for the period 1840-1845. Many newspapers, such as the *Cumberland Times*, *New South Wales Examiner*, *Parramatta Chronicle* and the *Shipping Gazette* and *General Trade List*, can be read and searched for place information. The *Shipping Gazette*, for example, contains lists of materials imported from overseas (such as paint) and coastal ports (such as timber), giving some indication of the availability of certain building materials at certain times, as well as some understanding of possible landscape change in the vicinity of coastal towns. These periodicals can be accessed at: [www.nla.gov.au/acdp](http://www.nla.gov.au/acdp)

## APPENDIX A

### SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

#### Buildings

Apperley, R., Irving, R., and Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1989

Brown, R., & Green, A., *Type Profiles: Terrace Housing in New South Wales*, Australian Heritage Commission, 1987

Freeman, P., *The Homestead: a Riverina Anthology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1982

Howells, T., & Morris, C., *Terrace Houses in Australia*, Landsdowne, Sydney 1999

Lucas, C., & Joyce, R., *Australian Country Houses: Homesteads, Farmsteads and Rural Retreats*, Landsdowne, Sydney (1994) 1997

Moore, R., Burke, S. & Joyce, R., *Australian Cottages*, Landsdowne, Sydney (1989) 1994

Stapleton, I & M., *Australian House Styles*, Flannel Flower Press, Mullumbimby, 1997

Turner, B., *The Australian Terrace House*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1995

#### Landscapes and Gardens

Australian Garden History Society, *Historic Gardens in Australia: Guidelines for the Preparation of Conservation Plans*, Australian Garden History Society, 1986

Baskerville, B., 'Commons of Colonial New South Wales', in *Knowing Places, Understanding Spaces: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the RAHS with Affiliated Societies at Ultimo*, Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney 1994

Read, S., 'Interwar Gardens', in NSW Heritage Office, *Heritage NSW*, Summer 2000, vol. 7, no. 1, the Office: 6-7

Sagazio, C., (ed), *The National Trust Research Manual: Investigating Buildings, Gardens and Cultural Landscapes*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney 1992.

Tanner, H., (Guest Curator) *Converting the Wilderness: The Art of Gardening in*

*Colonial Australia* (exhibition guide), Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1979  
Archaeology

Connah, G., *The Archaeology of Australia's History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne 1988

Karskens, G., *Inside The Rocks: the Archaeology of a Neighbourhood*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney 1999

### **Place Names (Toponymy)**

Pollon, F., (ed), *The Book of Sydney Suburbs*, Cornstalk, Sydney (1988) 1996

Dictionary Research Centre, Macquarie University *National Place Names Project*  
website: [www.humanities.mq.edu/nppn](http://www.humanities.mq.edu/nppn)  
[website includes a bibliography which is especially useful for regional NSW]

NSW Heritage Office, *Why is this beach called....?*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney, 2000  
[in press, for information contact David Nutley or Tim Smith at the NSW Heritage Office, (02) 9635 6155]

### **Objects and Artefacts (Movable Heritage)**

NSW Heritage Office and Ministry for the Arts Movable Heritage Project, *Movable Heritage Principles*, Heritage Office, Sydney 1999

NSW Heritage Office, *Objects in their Place: An Introduction to Movable Heritage*, Heritage Office, 2000

### **Regional histories**

NSW Heritage Office, *Regional Histories*, NSW Heritage Office, Sydney, 1996

Royal Australian Historical Society, *Regional Identity: Myth or Reality: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the RAHS with Affiliated Societies at Tocal*, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1991

### **Records**

Hughes, J., (Ed) *Local Government...Local History: a Guide to NSW Local Government Minute Books and Rate Records*, Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney 1990.

Royal Australian Historical Society, *Technical Information Service Bulletins*:

- No 3 Oral History for the Local Community
- No 4 Researching Old Buildings
- No 7 Local Government Records and the Historian
- No 10 Using Directories in Local History Research
- No 15 Using Maps in Local History
- No 17 How Old is My House
- No 19 Research Tools for Local and Family Historians
- No 26 Land Use and Ownership

The RAHS Library contains an extensive index to the *RAHS Journal*, produced since 1901, which has many articles on places and sites. The Library also has an extensive catalogue to its collections which can allow for searches be made by local government area. Contact the RAHS on (02) 9247 8001, or [www.rahs.org.au](http://www.rahs.org.au)

Archival and collections guides via the Internet: NSW State Records at [www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au) and National Archives of Australia at [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au).

The Society of Australian Genealogists maintains extensive collections of records and guides, many of which are useful for place research. Contact the Society on (02) 9247 3953, or [www.sag.org.au](http://www.sag.org.au).

## **Historians**

For general questions regarding historians and the broader role of history in the community contact the History Council of NSW on (02) 9385 1070 or [history@primus.com.au](mailto:history@primus.com.au)

To locate a professional historian, contact the Professional Historians Association (NSW) on (02) 9331 6920, or [www.phansw.org.au/register.html](http://www.phansw.org.au/register.html)

To locate a historian with some experience in the movable heritage field contact the Museums & Galleries Foundation on (02) 9358 1760, email: [mgfnsw@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mgfnsw@ozemail.com.au)

To locate an oral historian contact the Oral History Association (NSW), c/- Oral History Program, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney or (02) 9273 1414.

To locate a family historian contact the Society of Australian Genealogists on (02) 9247 3953, or [www.sag.org.au](http://www.sag.org.au).

To locate a local community historian, or a local historical society, contact the Royal Australian Historical Society on (02) 9247 8001, or [www.rahs.org.au](http://www.rahs.org.au)



## NSW Historical Themes

The Heritage Council's History Panel has developed a series of state themes to provide a thematic framework for historical research. The following table shows the NSW Historical Themes with correlating Australian historical themes.

Australian Theme	NSW Theme
1 Tracing the natural evolution of Australia,	<i>Environment - naturally evolved</i>
2 Peopling Australia	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures
	<i>Convict</i>
	<i>Ethnic influences</i>
	<i>Migration</i>
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	<i>Agriculture</i>
	<i>Commerce</i>
	<i>Communication</i>
	<i>Environment - cultural landscape</i>
	<i>Events</i>
	<i>Exploration</i>
	<i>Fishing</i>
	<i>Forestry</i>
	<i>Health</i>
	<i>Industry</i>
	<i>Mining</i>
	<i>Pastoralism</i>
	<i>Science</i>
	<i>Technology</i>
	<i>Transport</i>
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Towns, suburbs and villages
	<i>Land tenure</i>
	<i>Utilities</i>
	Accommodation
5 Working	<i>Labour</i>
6 Educating	<i>Education</i>
7 Governing	<i>Defence</i>
	<i>Government and administration</i>
	<i>Law and order</i>
	<i>Welfare</i>
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Domestic life
	Creative endeavour
	<i>Leisure</i>
	<i>Religion</i>
	<i>Social institutions</i>
	<i>Sport</i>
9 Marking the phases of life	<i>Birth and Death</i>
	<i>Persons</i>