The Getty Conservation Institute
Field Trip Report

Case Study #3, Values Assessment and Site Management Project
Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia

Jan. 6-10, 2002
By: F. LeBlanc

Port Arthur – View from Mason Cove

Case Studies in Values Assessment and Site Management

During the past four years, under the stewardship of Marta de la Torre, the GCI has been carrying out research on “values” in the field of heritage. A special focus was placed on the relationship between the economic and the cultural values. Two reports on this work have been published, and a third, in preparation, will focus on stakeholder consultation and the assessment of values, exploring methods in ethnography, geography, economics, and environmental conservation.

As an extension of this effort, a series of case studies is being developed to serve as examples of how values-driven site management has been interpreted, employed, and evaluated. This project is a collaboration of the Australian Heritage Commission, English Heritage, Parks Canada, US national Park Service, and the Getty Conservation Institute.

Case Study #1 was Grosse-Île in Quebec, Canada. Case Study #2 is Chaco Culture in New Mexico, USA. Case Study #3 is Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia and Case Study #4 will be Hadrian’s Wall in the United Kingdom (April 2002).

Each case in this series will illustrate how values were identified, how they are enshrined in documents and how they impact the day-to-day management.

The five partner organizations met in Port Arthur from January 6 to 10.

The Partnership Team to study the Port Arthur case comprised:
Gordon Bennett, Director of Policy, National Historic Sites Directorate, Parks Canada
Dwight T. Pitcaithley, Chief Historian, United States National Park Service
Jane Lenon, Commissioner, Australia Heritage Commission
Cristopher Young, Head, World Heritage & International Policy, English Heritage
Randall Mason, Director Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, University of Maryland
Marta de la Torre, Principal Project Specialist, GCI
David Myers, Research Assistant, GCI
Francois LeBlanc, Head, Field Projects

From the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (PAHSMA), we had discussions with:
Barry Jones, Chair of PAHSMA
Sharon Sullivan, Deputy Chair of PAHSMA
Jeff Kelly, Board member, PAHSMA
Margaret Scott, poet and novelist, Board member, PAHSMA
Wendy Kennedy, media and tourism expert, Board member, PAHSMA
Stephen Large, Chief Executive Officer of PAHSMA
Peter Romey, Conservation Manager, PAHSMA
Julia Clark, Interpretation strategies and collections management, PAHSMA
Greg Jackman, Archaeology strategies and projects, PAHSMA
Ian Boersma, Fabric conservation projects, PAHSMA
Sue Hood, Port Arthur research center, PAHSMA
Godden Mackay Logan, Heritage Consultants, Sydney

Where is Port Arthur located?

What is Port Arthur Historic Site?
Port Arthur is a small community of a few hundred inhabitants located in southern Tasmania, Australia. The Port Arthur Historic Site is located there. It is the most important historic site in Tasmania. An extract from the draft nomination to the World Heritage List of “The Australian Convict Sites”, prepared by Jane Lenon, describes very well what Port Arthur Historic Site is. The nomination, which comprises eight sites scattered throughout Australia, is still under review at this time by the government of Australia.

“Port Arthur Historic Site is an outstanding example of the British colonial penal system, and superbly demonstrates the evolution of that system during the 19th Century.”
The fact that Port Arthur operated from 1830 to 1877, was the second largest convict settlement in Australia after Norfolk Island, and was actively promoted by the colonial and imperial authorities and subsequent historians, novelists and dramatists as a “hell on earth” makes it a site of great emotional response. This response is reinforced by the fact that many of the well-preserved structures reflect in tangible form much of the evolution and change in British penal practices, including the system of silence and separation in the Separate Prison, that are today regarded with abhorrence.

The coast of Australia was to witness a new colonial experiment, never tried before, nor repeated since. An unexplored continent became a jail. The space around it, the oceans, became a wall 14,000 miles thick. Australia was settled to defend English property not from invaders across the Channel, but from the marauder within. English lawmakers wished not only to get rid of the “criminal class” but if possible to forget about it – out of sight, out of mind. They also wanted to establish a foothold as an outpost of the Empire in the Southern Oceans. The crown shipped 160,000 men, women and children in bondage to Australia. This was the furthest forced exile of citizens at the behest of a European government in modern history.

This migration set in train irreversible consequences for the natural environment and for the original inhabitants of the Australian continent. Within a year of the arrival of the First Fleet, all the cabbage tree palms around Sydney Harbor had been cleared and relationships with the indigenous people had soured.
Despite the efforts of the Governor. It also had a profound effect on the cultural development of the nation founded as a place of exile for outcasts.

It shaped government processes of control of people and the development of land administration systems; convicts who were outcasts in turn despised the Aboriginal inhabitants and the whole system laid the foundations for rejection and racism that impinge on Australian culture and cultural heritage today.

The Australian Convicts Sites is nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of its outstanding universal values. The sites making up the Australian Convict Sites nomination are each a combination of architectural and technological ensembles, including within it archaeological evidence, set in a landscape that is often in itself an historical document of the convict system, linking key aspects and chronological expressions of the same historico-cultural group, that is convicts.

The Australian Convict Sites represents an important aspect of the global migrations, free and forced, that have been a major feature of world history over the last three hundred years.”

Site visits
During our stay at Port Arthur we visited several other sites that are part of the “Australian Convict Sites”

Saltwater River Coal Mines
“Being transported to Van Diemen’s Land (Port Arthur) in the 1820s or 30s bore little relation to serving a modern prison sentence.

On arrival in the colony the convict was assigned to work for someone as their servant. If all went well, within a couple of years, the convict would receive a “ticket of leave”, and was free to go anywhere in the colony and work for wages. He or she could also marry and even run a business. The whole system was much more like exile than any modern prison term. A few more years might see a well-behaved convict free and farming a small plot of land granted him by the Governor.

The assignment system worked very well to develop the country and, despite the “Gothic Horror” of punishment stations like Port Arthur, it established European society in Australia. However by the late 1830s the authorities in London had grave misgivings about the system on two, seemingly contradictory, counts.

On the one hand, the use of convicts as serfs to free settlers smacked of slavery, but, on the other, emancipated convicts in the colonies were presented with far greater opportunities for a decent material life than their cousins back in Dickensian London. This seemed to even liberal-minded observers neither just
desserts for crime nor a deterrent to its commission. There was a constant tension between those trying to make the system work and establish modern society in the colonies, and the authorities in England who wanted crime adequately punished.

In 1838, a House of Commons Select committee recommended that, in future, all transported prisoners be sent to work in gangs for a period at the start of their sentences. These gangs were to work at stations set aside for this purpose, and the convicts to sleep in barracks at the so-called “probation stations”. This led to extraordinary and rapid changes on the Tasman Peninsula as Governor Sir John Franklin set about implementing the imprecise version of the report’s recommendations that he received.

Between 1841 and 1842 probation stations were built at Saltwater River, Impression Bay, Flinders Bay, Wedge Bay and the Cascades. The Coal Mines outstation also became a probation station. Some of these were abandoned quite quickly and some changed their function, but within a few years over 2,000 convicts, invalids and paupers were being held on the Tasman Peninsula, in establishments variously designated as probation, punishment or invalid stations.” James Parker

Eaglehawk Neck

“Lieutenant Governor George Arthur saw the Tasman Peninsula as an ideal site for his new jail for secondary offenders, established at Port Arthur in 1830. Since it was almost entirely surrounded by water, the Peninsula, he claimed, was a “natural penitentiary”. The only escape route for run-away convicts attempting to reach the Tasmanian mainland on foot lay across the narrow isthmus at Eaglehawk Neck. And here by 1831 a military guard was stationed, supported by a detachment of constables and equipped with a whaleboat for patrolling the shores of Norfolk Bay. Then Ensign Peyton Jones suggested adding a line of savage dogs, mostly mastiffs, chained at intervals across the narrow land bridge. Another innovation took the form of oil lamps which, shining down on a path of crushed shells, provided illumination at night.” Margaret Scott

The Cascades

“Cascades was part of a “natural penitentiary” from which escape by land was almost impossible. By 1840, the practice of assigning newly arrived convicts to settler-masters was abandoned. Instead new arrivals were to be housed in “probation stations” and set to work in gangs on government projects. What better site could there be for a probation station than an inlet on Norfolk Bay, sealed off from the settled districts by the Eaglehawk Neck dog-line, yet, by sea, conveniently close to Hobart?” Margaret Scott
Site Values: Why is Port Arthur important?

The following are extracts from The Port Arthur Historic Site Conservation Plan.

Aboriginal Values
- The Port Arthur Historic Site and general area have a long Aboriginal association. The area was occupied by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people for several thousands of years up until, and probably until slightly after, the British invasion of Tasmania.

Aesthetic Values
- Port Arthur is a cultural landscape of picturesque beauty. Its remnant ruins and structured configuration, in a serene setting, symbolize a transformation from “hated stain” to celebration of convictism in Australia.

Historic Values
- Port Arthur is a premier Australian convict site and a place that provides a window into the nation’s convict history.
- The settlement of Port Arthur was a major event in the history of Tasmania.
- The Probation System – a system used only in Van Diemens Land and at Norfolk Island – was a uniquely Australian approach to convict management, providing punishment to ensure that transportation remained a deterrent, but also opportunities for reform and betterment. The system is important in the context of both Australian and world penal history.

Scientific Values
- Port Arthur’s subsurface and maritime archaeological deposits are a finite resource of national, possibly international, research significance. Investigation and analysis of these deposits has the potential to provide a unique insight into convictism, from the material culture perspective.
- Port Arthur’s buildings, engineering relics and other structures contain, within their fabric, evidence of construction technology, available materials and adaptation to suit local conditions.

Social Values
- Port Arthur is the best-known symbol of Australia’s convict past, a highly revered icon that symbolically represents Tasmania’s place in Australian history.
- Port Arthur is a symbol of modern heritage practice in Australia – an expression of how we care (or don’t care) about our heritage. It holds an important place in the history of modern heritage conservation in Australia.

World Heritage Values
- The “Australian Convict Sites” are an outstanding surviving component of the global migrations that have been a major feature of world history, over the last three hundred years. They have outstanding universal value through their fabric, landscapes and stories of convictism as part of this universal human story. They are superb examples representing the two major themes running through the convict migration experience – the use of convicts as labour to extend colonial power, and the use of forced migration as a way to both deter crime and rebellion and remove unwanted criminals from the streets, overcrowded prisons and hulks.
Comments and Issues
(The following are from my personal notes and do not represent a complete or even representative list of issues but are simply meant to give an overview of some of the discussions that we had in Port Arthur with our colleagues)

- **Australia:** Australia is made up of seven separate states that decided to federate in 1901. Each State kept authority over land management. The Federal government currently has no jurisdiction over the Port Arthur Historic Site. But if the site is put on the World Heritage List, then the Federal government will acquire some responsibility as a consequence of the nomination. This would become an added value that will need to be considered and managed.

- **Port Arthur:** Port Arthur was a prison for 40 years but has been a historic site for one hundred years.

- **Economic values vs Conservation values:** The site is managed by the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (PAHSMA) created in 1987. The Authority’s mandate is to ensure that visitors receive maximum enjoyment and value for their money, while also protecting the sensitive fabric of the former Port Arthur Penal Settlement. Though the Authority has a clear mandate to generate revenues, it was successful in convincing government that it will not manage the site in a way that would give priority to the economic mandate. It will be managed first and foremost to preserve the site assets and values. The Authority demonstrated to government that the site and the activities on site were instrumental in bringing tourists to the region thus generating a great amount of wealth indirectly. The studies commissioned by the Authority proved that the economic impact of Port Arthur Historic Site was far greater than the government investment.

- **Visitors:** There were 200,000 visitors who paid an entrance fee during 2001. This does not take into account the local people who have free access to the site nor the 46,000 visitors who participated to the Historic Ghost Tours held during the evenings.

- **Budget and long-term financing:** PAHSMA manages an annual budget of approximately $8 million Australian dollars. Last year, it received a commitment from government for a financial contribution of $2 million Australian dollars per year for the next five years. The funds are to be used exclusively for the conservation of the buildings and grounds. This contribution enabled the Authority to build a solid management, conservation and marketing team. Since no one on site has a “permanent” status, having access to a guaranteed source of income made all the difference in attracting quality people to work at the site as they could be offered multi-year employment contracts.

- **Conservation Plan:** The Conservation Plan was prepared during the year 2000. It is based on the Burra Charter methodology. It was instrumental in bringing together everyone working on site, from managers, visitor services, marketing, research, documentation and archives, maintenance and conservation staff. The reason why the Conservation Plan is working well is because all staff are committed to working together, not because it is “written in the Plan”. It works because of the “mindset” not because of the various plans. The “process” for developing a conservation plan is as important, if not more, than the printed document. This “process” must continue once the Conservation Plan is written and approved. In Port Arthur, management ensures that the process continues through various community activities such as participating in weekly radio programs, writing in the municipal newspaper, organizing workshops, marketing to the entire peninsula, the Board having supper with local groups when it meets every two months etc.

- **Interpretation Plan:** The Interpretation Plan builds on the Conservation Plan and its statement of values. More activities for kids were created, along with special interest tours, garden tours and archaeological tours. Authenticity and integrity are important factors in the interpretation activities.

- **Make the site disappear. Values change:** For a long time following the closing of the penitentiary activities, the population of Tasmania tried to eradicate the site. The local population considered it to be a site where horrific events took place and that these activities brought shame to their past. This mentality changed during the past twenty years. Now people come to Port Arthur to discover their past and find their ancestors.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation are important management activities. They are undertaken to see if corporate objectives are being met. The approach of interviewing people and letting them talk about their impressions proved to be much more successful than having visitors fill questionnaires. During the interviews, men were separated from women. It was interesting to see that the stories and perceptions were quite different.
• **Archaeology:** Archaeological investigations began in 1977 at Port Arthur. There were intense archaeological campaigns carried out during the 1980s but none of the archaeological teams wrote up reports on their findings. The current team is faced with a 25 years backlog of material. It all needs to be identified and catalogued.

• **GIS System:** The archaeological information is currently being inputted into a GIS system.

• **Documentation and information management:** This is a challenge. Only recently were all collections brought under the same roof and projects given an identification number. Now, photographs, reports, plans, objects and electronic files can be linked together for documentation purposes. Each staff’s computer has a file structure that replicates the documentation center file structure to ensure that electronic data is stored in the same way whether generated by visitor services, maintenance, conservation services or administration. A database to link all this information together is being created.

• **Economic values and conservation values:** Our group debated with the site staff about the fact that the Burra Charter from which the Conservation Plan is derived does not incorporate economic values nor does it direct planners to incorporate the economic values into the conservation plans. The economic values are discussed in the Corporate Plan that is presented each year to government.

• **Tragic event:** On Sunday, 28 April 1996, a single gunman killed 35 people at and around the Port Arthur Historic Site. Twenty of these people were murdered inside the Broad Arrow Café, a structure related to commercial and tourist operations at this historic site. How do Australians cope with this tragic site as survivors, as witnesses, as heritage managers, as local residents, as sympathetic nationals? The Broad Arrow tragedy prompted the Federal government to adopt tough gun control legislation two weeks following the events. The process leading to the creation of a memorial on site for this tragic event was long, painful and difficult. It remains a very sensitive issue for the local population. The “tragedy” as it is now called, is deliberately not being promoted by management. It is still considered “new” and not yet part of “history” by the people. It is considered to be another “layer” of tragic events that will be added to the history of this site.

• **Communication of tragic or horrific events:** The issue of how to present and communicate the values related to tragic or horrific events to the public through fabric and interpretation was the object of many discussions. Currently, the site setting is quite idyllic: well preserved ruins are presented in a garden setting, with green well-maintained grass and pathways, the birds singing and the blue sea gently washing the shore. At night, during the ghost tours, lanterns, candles, the sound of chains being dragged and orders being shouted, the darkness and feeling of isolation are much more poignant.

• **International conference:** In June 2002 the Port Arthur Historic Site, in conjunction with the University of Tasmania, the Tasman Institute of Conservation and Convict Studies, and Australia ICOMOS will host a major international conference with the theme of **Exploring, conserving and interpreting heritage places which commemorate painful or ambivalent themes in the history of our societies.** The conference will provide a focus for exploring the nuances of meaning and memory of such heritage places. They tell us much about our origins, history and past way of life. They also resonate with strong emotional themes of tragedy, injustice, endurance and sometimes redemption. For these reasons society may have an ambivalent attitude to such places and may even seek their disappearance.

**PAHSMA / TASMANIAN HERITAGE COUNCIL**

**Heritage Seminar**

On January 10, the members of the Getty Conservation Institute “Values Assessment and Site Management Project” Team presented various aspects of their work to an audience of approximately 40 persons gathered for this one-day seminar.

Barry Jones, Chair of PAHSMA Board, welcomed the participants. Sharon Sullivan, Deputy Chair of PAHSMA Board, facilitated the Seminar.
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. de la Torre</td>
<td>Principal Project specialist, The Getty Conservation Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Sullivan</td>
<td>Vice-Chair, The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Mason</td>
<td>Director, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, University of Maryland</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Bennett</td>
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<td>Jane Lenon</td>
<td>Commissioner, Australia Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Mac Lean</td>
<td>Heritage Consultant, Los Angeles, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Clark</td>
<td>Head, Historic Environment Management, English Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. LeBlanc</td>
<td>Head, Field Projects, The Getty Conservation Institute</td>
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<td>Participants</td>
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CONSERVATION PLAN - The Study Process

CONSERVATION ANALYSIS

Documentary Evidence  Physical Evidence  Social Values  Aboriginal Values  Community Consultation  Initial Workshop

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DRAFT No. 1 - SIGNIFICANCE

Identification of Constraints, Issues and Opportunities

Significance  Physical  Statutory  Community  Market  Environment  PHASMA

Policy and Strategy Development

DRAFT No. 2 – POLICY / STRATEGY / IMPLEMENTATION

DRAFT No. 3 COMPLETE REPORT

FINAL REPORT

Consultation with:
- PASHMA Staff
- Stakeholders
- Wider Community

PAHSMA Staff Workshop

PAHSMA and Stakeholder Review

Key Stakeholder Workshop at Port Arthur

PAHSMA Review

PAHSMA Review
### Volume One: Overview Report

**The Conservation Plan**
- Objectives
- Format
- Process
- Team

**Port Arthur the Place**
- History
- Description
- Environment
- Context

**Why is Port Arthur Important?**
- What is significance?
- How is significance assessed?
- Summary Values of Port Arthur?
- Relative values of Elements

**What are the Major Factors?**
- Cultural Values
- Aboriginal Values
- PAHSMA
- Other Constraints
- Consultation Results
- Approach

**Conservation Policies**
- General Policies
- Places and Items
- Issues

**Implementation**
- Where this Plan fits in
- Strategy

### Volume Two: Supporting Information

**1.0 The Study Process**
- Methodology
- Tasks
- Contributors

**2.0 The Port Arthur Resource**
- An inventory of places and items that comprise Port Arthur Historic Site

**3.0 Cultural Significance**
- Aboriginal
- Aesthetic
- Historic
- Scientific
- Social
- Application of Criteria

**4.0 Summary of Issues**
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- PAHSMA Requirements
- Physical Conditions
- Statutory Controls
- Community Concerns
- Wider Environment & Market

**5.0 Planning & Management**
- Conservation Planning Structure
- Review of Existing Plans
- Sample of Works Procedures

**6.0 Recommendations**
- Responsibilities
- Implementation

**7.0 Supporting Data List**
Port Arthur Church ruins

Port Arthur in 1848

Island of the Dead

The medical precinct

Government gardens

The Visitor reception center
The Asylum

Asylum interior

Commandant’s house

Commandant’s house interior, exhibition of various stages of evolution

Broad Arrow Café – Memorial to the 1996 tragedy

Memorial Cross with the names of the victims