

talk:

some thoughts on landscape character, heritage and historical landscape values

Good morning everyone

I really do appreciate this invitation from you to join your AGM, and to talk on landscape heritage.

Before my introductory visit with David and Vivienne on 21 September, I think the last time I visited was in the 1970s when I was studying landscape architecture. So it was a real delight to return to this island of which I still held a few wonderful memories, in particular, a walk across the middle -on a narrow dirt road, to reach a magical small beach - with mangroves just offshore, and where we were alone in a very beautiful place.

Before I talk about some aspects and examples of historical landscape assessment and planning, I'd like to briefly share something serendipitous following my recent visit here. At that visit I was charmed and impressed to see the stone curlews walking blithely through the heart of the 'busy' foreshore near Curlew or Scrubby Creek.

Just about a week later I received an email with pictures of a curlew pair nesting in my cousin's yard at Upper Brookfield.

Then about 10 days ago, while working in the grounds of the Old Museum building, I suddenly came across a curlew on its nest – in the car park of all places!

Such wonderful birds aren't they ?, –to share the landscape with, – quite special spirits with their night calls and day stillness.

Very soon on visiting Coochie Mudlo one understands it is a special island with distinct landscapes and seascapes - full of spirit of place. – it really has several genius loci around the island.

David has have briefed me on some of the issues you address here in your stewardship of the island.

- The resident population is changing from a longstanding pattern it seems, in particular since 2007. There are expectation changes:- larger houses, water views, easier driving and parking, and for ferry and jetty facilities, - for more Council services.

There are new pressures from many residents, and from 'outside', for changes.

- Council's regional planning, I understand, following or generating the population and visitation pressures, includes Coochie Mudlo Island as a regional open space resource, - thus likely more changes for residents and long standing visitors.

- The undeveloped landscapes (holding high environmental values) are defined, and limited in their capacity to bear the likely residential and recreation uses of those landscapes, beaches and seascapes. Any dramatic natural processes, such as the February cyclone effects, are traumatic for our perception of the island character –there is no leeway, such as before human developments were on the island.

I don't claim to know Coochie Mudlo well yet, but I've learnt already there are many layers of living narratives here,

- of stimulating environmental interactions, and the environment's variability,

- of meanings and associations with the landscape - held by residents and regular visitors,
- of different forms of living with the island, changing over the past lifetime, and
- of the layers of memory and attachments they have engendered, and
- of concerns regarding anticipated changes.

As well as some understanding of the outstanding natural habitat values of this island, I learnt of the beauty of the place, and the love for it held by all of you.

Highly distinctive qualities of this landscape are inherent in its island being: its modest scale, and its natural reserve coastal edge - the Emerald Fringe.

- The beauty of the island's landscape, including threading through the residential / developed areas, is always readily seen and experienced,
- the streetscape characters reflect the calm, low-key life enjoyed here,
- the small island experience is charming and part of the everyday.

- As well as the aesthetic and environmental, there are deeper narratives which, when learnt, enrich all of these aspects of being on Coochie Mudlo:

- the stories and places of the early farmers, fishermen, oyster farmers, holiday regulars,

- the patterns of small lots, narrow roads, gravel roads, Bribie pines retained,
- tracks around the island, and

how these all become, to different degrees and in different ways I suspect, parts of the island landscape identity each of you hold.

So these narratives and experiences all of you know.

I've just had the privilege of being introduced and starting to share in them.

in summary, I hear of the strong attachment to place here, and the concern about changes coming, - either potential impacts on natural values, or impacts on the cultural landscapes –the foreshore and seascape, now a part of your ties to this place.

so, -- How to retain and manage all that is highly valued ?

Part of the direction comes with a varied, often long, process –as you all are part of already, and know of its complexities.

I've some projects to briefly tell of landscapes in urban contexts which are highly valued.

These have focused on the landscape character and historical values.

I've already noted how these values are very strong here on Coochie Mudlo:

- the long history of residence and lives made on the island,
- the form and character the settlement has developed over time – its unique qualities, scale, details.
- the island experience – jetties, ferries, shorelines, water around, and being part of the Bayscape, - and multi-faceted maritime experiences,
- the ties to place when it is a unique place, individual stories, character, local customs and understandings amongst the island community – and within the visitor community.

These characteristics have been in the landscapes of my project examples.

First, I'd like to point out that there is an established, but still updating landscape planning field, and it includes a procedure for the identification, assessment, and recording of cultural landscapes, both of landscape character and historical landscapes.

These are another layer of substantial landscape value that has in the past generally not been included in regional or local planning.

I will just focus on some examples from my project experience of historical landscapes.

It should be noted that the *historical* value I speak of extends to the current time, - the historical time depth gives weight to our current appreciation and attachment to place.

Castle Hill Townsville

Castle Hill is undoubtedly the landscape identifier of Townsville. Its natural characteristics –the dramatic terrain, and elevation, the cliffs, the pink granite, are striking. Its proximity to the city centre and the coast also add to its memorability. But it also has a long history tied to the people of Townsville over the city's history: – being sighted from afar out at sea, - tracks up it, then a road, - lookouts, - telecommunications, and so on. It has an awesome beauty highlighted by sunrises and sunsets.

In 1993 I was the heritage assessor on its nomination to the Qld Heritage Register.

Despite many objections Castle Hill was placed on there Register for :

criteria a

It is important in demonstrating the evolution of Queensland's history as an early example of rapid environmental degradation and consequent conservation measures initiated by the local community.

criteria e

The site exhibits a landmark quality and natural aesthetic appeal valued by the Townsville community.

themes:

2 Exploiting, utilising and transforming the land / 2.8 Protecting and conserving the environment

2 Exploiting, utilising and transforming the land / 2.2 Exploiting natural resources

7 Maintaining order / 7.6 Defending the country

The Town of Seventeen Seventy

This was another contested landscape for which, in 1996, I was the independent heritage assessor on its nomination to the Register. The nomination came from a very small community group concerned about likely developments along the beach and the likely subsequent changes to the low key and historic foreshore landscape, and its setting.

A landscape extent somewhat less than what I recommended was placed on the QHR for :

The Town of Seventeen Seventy and its landscape setting and approaches is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a small, coastal, Queensland camping and holiday village, which began as a camping site for fishing and boating holidays, and continues this function to this day.

With increasing development pressure being placed on Queensland's small, coastal camping and holiday settlements, the Town of Seventeen Seventy remains an uncommon and beautiful example of its type in Queensland and eastern Australia.

criteria e The place is significant for its very high aesthetic values of both State and National significance.

criteria g In terms of strong or special association, it should be noted that Aboriginal people of the area have, within their oral tradition, stories of witnessing the landing of Lieutenant Cook, Joseph Banks and others of the Endeavour. The place also has a strong and continued association since it was first regularly visited in the early 1890s by the local and district community as a quiet holiday destination.

criteria h Cook's Landing Place has a special association with the work of Lieutenant James Cook, Joseph Banks, and fellow scientists of the Endeavour, whose voyage of exploration along the eastern coast of Australia in 1770 transformed the future of the Australian continent and its indigenous peoples.

Point Lookout Foreshore Reserve

I've undertaken several projects on the Pt Lookout Reserve, but the first involvement was for a community group – writing the landscape character assessment and citation for the National Trust listing. This included the historical, holiday – fishing village and its traditional streetscape qualities. Some years later I updated and expanded those assessments for the Reserve Management Plan, and later undertook a Tracks Master Plan for the whole reserve, followed after a few years by the Cylinder Beach Master Plan for Redland Council.

The foreshore reserve, from Main Beach to Adder Rock, including Cylinder, Frenchman's, and Deadman's beaches, and the hillsides and bushland in to the roads, is on the Qld Heritage Register.

criteria a & e:

The foreshore is important for its outstanding natural beauty, offering a wide variety of land and seascape elements and views. The foreshore with its outlooks to the north and south are comprised of a series of beaches, rocky headlands, gorges and rocks, areas of diverse vegetation and rugged water edges of rock ledges, blowholes, tunnels and reefs. It is an area of great diversity and aesthetic complexity and offers panoramic views of the ocean.

themes:

Creating social and cultural institutions / 8.5 Sport and recreation

2 Exploiting, utilising and transforming the land / 2.9 Valuing and appreciating the environment and landscapes

Landscape Setting

I would like to digress briefly here on the value of *the landscape setting*.

The Burra Charter sets out the importance of considering the setting of a place of historical value.

Some points:

- The setting of the developed part of this island includes the Emerald Fringe –even seen in small part.
- Coochie Mudlo Island's setting includes Victoria Point.
- The setting of Victoria Point, and of the waterways around this island (– as important as roads are, as routes by which landscapes and urbanscapes are experienced and valued,) the setting of Victoria Point and those water routes includes the island's fringe, appreciated as a natural, highly scenic landscape.

Bankfoot House and Grounds

criteria d The siting of Bankfoot House on a flat ridge easily visible to travellers on the road, and near fresh water, is a good example of a favourable siting for a changing station on a coach route.

criteria e The place is a landmark on Old Gympie Road and stands in a picturesque setting occupying an area of level ground on a rise along the road with views out to the Glasshouse Mountains to the east (particularly Mt Tibrogargan) and surrounding paddocks/bushland generally. Prominent bunya pines in the garden stand as a distinctive element in the landscape.

The Gold Coast Heritage Landscapes study

A large project this year was my part on the Cardno team engaged by the Gold Coast Council to develop a methodology to identify and assess the landscape character and heritage landscapes of the Gold Coast, and to apply that overall, and then to 4 focus districts.

I won't be detailing all that project here, but a key feature I developed to express the historical continuity of landscape characterisation was to look for the stories associated with place -the key narratives. Often these were expressed around a particular person's role in the place's identity and community attachment.

I identified historical landscapes in beaches and their backdrops, along ridges, along roads and ferry routes, at and around specific historical places, and in serial landscapes.

The established heritage criteria and thresholds of the Heritage Act and established heritage practice were applied to assign relative value. This is a measure looked for in development of planning policies or guidelines – to inform decisions about allowable changes to valued landscapes.

In addition I used a new measure – the Gold Coast iconic or distinctive landscape, to pick up the uniqueness and strong image given to community sense of place by a landscape, which may not always hold conventional heritage or historical value.

That has been a scant sampling of those projects about highly valued landscapes –not dissimilar to Coochie Mudlo Island, - and landscapes first not officially recognised as of value, but following a soundly based assessment and documentation, can be incorporated by government in planning and protection measures.

Now Closer to Coochie Mudlo

I was reminded of your current landscape narrative recently when I walked along part of Bribie Island foreshore with friends in the Coo-ee Bushwalkers.

We started out at Buckleys Hole Conservation Area, a highly significant migratory and local bird habitat, then walked around the shore through mangrove forest, then across the revegetating dune outside a Casuarina tree belt (planted in the 1980s by concerned residents).

Diane Oxenford an active member of the Bribie Island Residents conservation groups, including Coastcare and regularly records turtle visitations. Here she is recording to report a dead dugong.

We saw a sea eagle pair and their young, dolphins passing, many sea birds, and as we walked along the beaches, saw the February storm damage, and passed many people fishing.

I think you would find in the Bribie Island environmental groups similar stories to yours, and could share ideas, tales of those complex processes, and achievements.

However, I think that if you could bring forward all your historical narratives –the stories and their threads through to now, - the meanings and associations you hold with your island landscape and seascape, you would have a strong additional layer of value to bring to the planning discussion, and to any concrete plans under development.

The landscape character, the valued settings, the historical and living landscape characterisation can now be methodically and soundly identified, recorded and mapped as necessary, to satisfy the procedures and bounds Council planners work within.

- that historical and living landscape beauty and spirit can be brought forward to be taken account, along with the conventional pragmatics used in planning foreshores, jetties, parks, car parks and residential and recreational developments.

Thank you very much for your time to hear me this morning.