

**Tour of Cox's Road to Bathurst on May 23rd, 1965.
Compiled by E. J. McKenzie. [New South Wales]
Macquarie Regional Council of Historical Societies, 1965.**

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6. GUIDELINES FOR CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Introduction

There has been considerable interest in identifying and attempts at preserving the various relics and sites of the early mountains crossing, beginning with the misguided attempts to mark the "Explorers Tree" in 1870 (which resulted in the tree dying) ranging through the grandiose monuments of 1913 and the assortment of plaques and pedestals of the Blue Mountains Historical Society, to the walking tracks of the present day.

While the idea of public recognition and knowledge of historical sites and events is a good one, frequently the outcome has been based on ill-researched information, is uncoordinated with other developments, uses inappropriate means to mark the spot, or even defaces the work it is meant to commemorate. An example of this is the Mt. York summit where the site's historic significance has generated a haphazard collection of monuments, 1930's rubblework arches and a "wishing chair", 1950's concrete shelters and barbecue pits, toilets and litter bins scattered around on the bare clearing. On the old road below a plaque has been inserted, and steps have been cut into the old cuttings and formations.

In consideration of past experience it is recommended that future management of proposed walking tracks connected with Cox's Road and its associated sites generally be -

1. based on historical and archaeological research, as included in this report and further investigation;

2. a co-ordinated development, both within the project and with regard to other factors or projects;
3. as non-interventionist as possible with regard to original structures and formations.

6.2 Further Investigation

The research for this study has opened up new questions and further areas for investigation. Sites and areas which it was not possible to fully examine for this study are listed in Appendix 6.

While most of the line of Cox's Road has been generally, and in many places specifically, located, it may be both possible and desirable to locate precisely the remaining sections from available survey and historical data. This ongoing research could be undertaken by staff of the Metropolitan and Orange Lands Offices, who have already undertaken extensive work in identifying the line. The results should be integrated into the historical/archaeological framework of this study and any further major remains or structures located should be examined by an historical archaeologist.

6.3 Conservation Strategies

The Burra Charter states that "The aim of conservation is to retain or recover the cultural significance of a place and must include provision for its security, its maintenance and its future". The processes commonly used to implement conservation include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation, and the conservation policy should be developed on the basis of an understanding of both the site's cultural significance and its physical condition.

In the case of Cox's Road and the proposed walking tracks along its surviving precincts, it is recommended that the conservation strategy comprise:

1. a structural assessment where necessary
2. preservation and
3. restoration.

6.3.1 Structural Assessment

Where necessary an assessment should be made of the condition and stability of some of the structures, such as retaining walls, by a structural engineer or architect, preferably with experience in conservation matters. Any recommendation for the stabilisation or preservation of the structures should be carried out as part of the conservation strategy.

6.3.2 Preservation

Preservation is "limited to the protection, maintenance and, where necessary, stabilisation of the existing fabric, but without distortion of its cultural significance". The factors to be countered for the preservation of the road include natural forces - wind and water erosion, and vegetation growth (particularly trees); and human factors, including vandalism; vehicular traffic, particularly heavy vehicles; public works development and maintenance, including work by the Department of Main Roads, the Electricity Commission, the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, the State Rail Authority and Telecom, for example. All these factors potentially destroy or deface the remains of the road.

With regard to erosion by wind and water, these may be partly seen as natural and unavoidable factors and should be allowed to take their course where no appropriate measures can be taken to reduce their impact (the "Explorers Tree" at Katoomba is an example of an inappropriate measure). In any case, most of the stone remains do not appear to be much threatened by these factors. It may be necessary at some point to intervene where large volumes of water run over and across formations by redirecting the water course.

The removal of vegetation may be seen as "restoration" (see below) and should be done in accordance with the recommendations of the structural analysis.

The conservation problems arising from public works development are usually more the result of ignorance and accident than deliberate destruction. In recent years the wide recognition of the significance of Cox's Road, and heightened awareness of conservation generally, as well as heritage legislation, have resulted in the

commissioning of professional reports on the work's cultural significance and appropriate conservation measures. However, these mainly deal with precincts which are already recognised as early structures, and even then damage still occurs through carelessness or accident. For those precincts only recently discovered, however, it is very important to notify relevant works or management bodies as well as private owners so that the significance of the site can be recognised, and its conservation discussed before any new work proceeds. Where there is a conflict between proposed new work and the preservation of early sites, discussions should be held to ensure that all possible alternatives are examined. This is particularly relevant to the new highway work which is carried out continuously over the Blue Mountains.

Another means of heightening general awareness and ensuring the recognition of the various precincts is to notify the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.) with a view to their inclusion on the Trust's Register. Similarly, the N.S.W. Heritage Council should be provided with a copy of this report, as well as the Australian Heritage Commission in Canberra, which compiles the Register of the National Estate. Submissions could be prepared for the inclusion of Cox's Road remnants on this Register as well as that of the National Trust.

Vehicular traffic has already caused damage and wear to kerbs, cuttings and pavements, particularly in the area around Woodford, as detailed in Andrew Wilson's 1983 report on this site. Traffic should be limited on the precincts as far as possible.

With regard to vandalism, the Lands Department's experience with this problem on other walking tracks should be used to develop a strategy to discourage/prevent vandalism. Clear and official marking, regular supervision and co-operation of local people would be partly effective measures.

6.3.3 Restoration

The restoration of a place involves the "reassembling of displaced components or removal of accretions" in order to "reveal anew the culturally significant aspects of the place". It is based on existing physical, documentary and other evidence and stops at the point of conjecture and reconstruction.

On the Cox's Road precincts, restoration should involve:

- (a) clearing of vegetation
 - (b) removal of overlying material built up over known formation
 - (c) regular maintenance operations
 - (d) stabilisation of structures, where necessary.
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