

THE TASMAN PENINSULA LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT MANUAL: LOCAL AND WIDER RAMIFICATIONS

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(with one text-figure)

Tasman Peninsula's landscape, it is argued, is not only neglected but also a repository of historically significant evidence that has largely failed to achieve recognition. Examples of local landscape damage point to fundamental difficulties in heritage protection which have not been met by the conferring of National Estate status on Tasman Peninsula. The methods and results, to date, of a research programme aimed at directing attention to the landscape protection needs of Tasman Peninsula are explained, with particular reference to the realisation of the National Estate idea and to an application of the concept of cultural landscape conservation.

Key Words: Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania, landscape, heritage resources.

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INTRODUCTION

History is not enough on Tasman Peninsula — certainly not if by “history” is meant only the type of conservation programme initiated at Port Arthur Historic Site. Even if additional site conservation funds were available for Port Arthur, and even if similar programmes were extended to other peninsula penal station sites, this would leave unaddressed the care of a major resource which determines the character of the entire peninsula, namely, the landscape itself. There has been a singular lack of attention to the overall management of the peninsula's 47 000 ha, a landscape which not only provides the setting for all the historic sites but deserves recognition in its own right as a cultural heritage resource of outstanding significance. Furthermore, it is Tasman Peninsula in its entirety which is listed on the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission, not a number of separate historic buildings and sites.

This paper follows up the issue of non-consideration of the landscape as a whole on Tasman Peninsula: it begins by covering the evidence of neglect and culminates in an explanation of the author's research project, aimed at bringing forward the cause of the forgotten landscape. This research resulted in the publication of the *Tasman Peninsula Landscape Development Manual* which is intended

for all those responsible for local land. Its basic format is an inventory of resources closely associated with heritage values, assessment of those resources and provision of recommendations for their management with an eye to an overall landscape future.

Local issues discerned are also discussed in wider contexts in the paper. These are related to fundamental problems with current realisation of the concept of the National Estate and to new perceptions of landscape values and their conservation, which have emerged elsewhere but which Australia is only just beginning to recognise. It is suggested that efforts aimed at making good these deficiencies hold the promise of rewards for Australians, both in the realm of development of a more satisfactory relationship with the land and in terms of progress in the construction of a national identity.

THE EVIDENCE OF LANDSCAPE NEGLECT

The landscapes of tourism and recreation provide ready examples of neglect on Tasman Peninsula, including the sheer physical effects of very large numbers of visitors on sites where management inputs are low — degraded dune systems, trampled coastal heaths, and eroded pathways and scenic points. Inevitably, since Port Arthur has proved one of

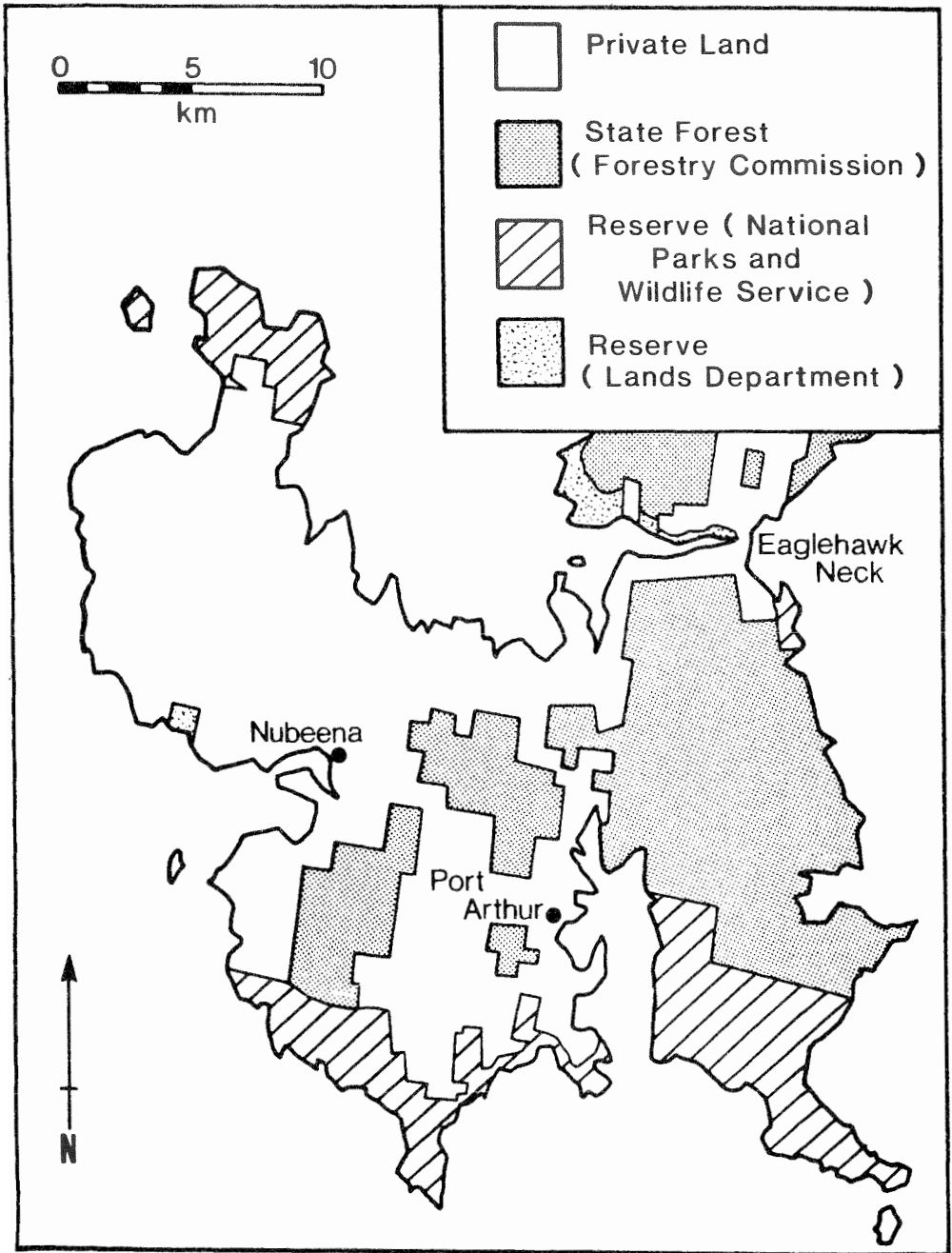


FIG. 1 — The broad pattern of land tenure on Tasman Peninsula (boundaries somewhat generalised).

Tasmania's most-visited tourist destinations, commercial attractions as well as visitor service buildings have been developed. Not all of these complement their immediate settings, or contribute positively to the peninsula's marked identity as a place or its role as a unique part of the nation's cultural and natural heritage. The construction of the Fox and Hounds hotel/motel in Tudor black and white style, for instance, can be interpreted as enshrining the preposterous view that Tasman Peninsula has no history of its own, and as betraying a lack of confidence in the area's own qualities. In addition, vigorous marketing on the local scene often seems to be equated with bigger and ever more highway advertising signs.

Samples from a wide range of additional landscape problems are the intrusion into parts of the coast of some of the worst features of holiday home development (commonly including drainage and erosion misfortunes associated with subdivisional and building practices, Russell 1983), examples of land clearing at odds with the visual character of the surroundings, and the loss of the charm of many local journeys as roads are remade with the forest verges pushed well back from the edge of the bitumen. Behind such practices must lie perceptions of landscape which are hard to understand. It can be plausibly ventured, however, that the "management" of Tasman Peninsula is to be judged in the same terms used by Cloke & Park (1985) when describing the value accorded to landscape, amongst other rural resources, in Britain and the United States:

"Landscape is generally viewed as a residual element in countryside resource management, in that it is generally created unconsciously as a result of resolving other resource-use conflicts."

On Tasman Peninsula, individual landowners, entrepreneurs, and government agencies are modifying the landscape in an unco-ordinated fashion, with no reference to an overall vision or a preferred landscape future. The Municipality of Tasman Council, though charged with regulating many aspects of development on private land, is poorly placed to show a lead. The Council has a tiny financial base — it represents but a thousand or so people — and has no resources for landscape management. Council does have a good planning scheme, the *Municipality of Tasman Planning Scheme* 1979, but no planner to capitalise on its best features or to carry out investigations on the effects of development on the landscape. Nor does the scheme, though containing many admonitions to harmonise new developments with the surrounding environment, offer guidelines or criteria to show decision-makers how to achieve such results.

THE BROADER CONTEXT

The National Estate Perspective

Tasman Peninsula's plight illustrates a key issue and a challenge facing those charged with protecting the National Estate and interpreting it to the community. This challenge, which lies at the heart of the National Estate concept, arises, as in the case of Tasman Peninsula, where large areas of land subject to multiple tenancies and occupancies are listed on the register.

As explained in the previous section, Tasman Peninsula is subject to decisions, development and management by many owners of freehold land, as well as by various levels of government and many agencies within government, especially at the State level. Figure 1, showing the broad pattern of local land tenure, indicates some of the complexities. Additional interests also represented are those of sectors of the forestry industry which hold statutory rights to Crown forests (under Tasmania's forest concession system) and exercise contractual rights over some private forests. There is no set of heritage conservation goals, such as might reflect the area's National Estate status, to which the individuals, industries, and arms of government involved can relate their plans and activities.

The difficulties inherent in this kind of situation have not yet been addressed by the protectors of the National Estate. The issue can be summarised thus: where an area of National Estate is subject to multiple tenancies and occupancies, what are the implications, when it comes to development and management, for those responsible for local land? Or, put differently: how can the community interest in National Estate areas, that is, those "that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations, as well as for the present community" (*Australian Heritage Commission Act* 1975, Section 4(1)), achieve expression under the tenure-occupancy circumstances described? Clearly, the realisation of the National Estate concept is not to be found in preservation, as might be possible if the land in question were publicly owned. On the other hand, if National Estate registration carries no added responsibilities, it might well be argued that there is no point in the exercise at all. Nor is the central difficulty under discussion ameliorated by other possibilities for heritage protection, such as can be offered by the application of land use controls in favour of heritage values, or government incentives (like grants-in-aid for approved conservation projects). Such mechanisms have not been invoked to date as part of Australia's national heritage legislation; very

scarce funds for some projects are available annually through the National Estate Grants Program but not to individuals. Furthermore, Tasmania has not adopted its own State heritage legislation; there are no sources at State level which might be tapped for assistance in addressing the matter of landscape management on Tasman Peninsula.

A Cultural Landscape Perspective

The cultural landscape idea can be used to redefine the scope of heritage resources. It shifts the focus from the built environment, which has claimed most of the attention devoted to cultural heritage in Australia over the last two decades, to the land itself. The cultural landscape, the landscape modified by human activity, can be understood (Tishler 1982) as embracing, in addition to buildings,

“a broad and complex assemblage of interrelated natural and cultural features that establish the essential fabric for many historic sites, districts, neighbourhoods, communities, and even entire regions.”

Amongst planning and conservation professionals, landscape has hitherto been recognised largely in a natural resources context, but is being seen increasingly “as an expression of our history and culture” (Tishler 1982).

If this perspective is adopted, the cultural landscape idea can provide not merely a new way of looking at familiar environments but a new basis for their conservation (Taylor 1984b), and one that goes beyond aesthetics. The landscape is seen as charged with social meanings (Powell 1979), as holding symbolic value for a culture, and as providing significant evidence which society can employ to understand its historical treatment of the environment (Powell 1979) and attain self-knowledge (Smith 1976). It has been argued that it is the investigation of the good and bad aspects of historic treatments of the Australian landscape that can serve as an excellent foundation for an improved relationship with the land and, at the same time, assist in the evolution of a national identity (Powell 1979).

The idea of the conservation of cultural landscapes is only beginning to be introduced into Australia in contemporary times, with seminal theoretical development by Ken Taylor, lecturer in landscape architecture at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (Taylor 1984a,b), although archaeologists in Australia have professed the concept through the discipline of landscape archaeology for some time (R. Morrison, pers. comm.). The term

“cultural landscape” has begun to receive currency amongst the heritage protection agencies of government at both Commonwealth and State levels (see, for example, Victorian National Estate Committee 1984, p.18).

Models of conservation practice can be found elsewhere, such as in the National Parks of Britain, some special parks in the United States, like the Adirondack Park and the Cape Cod National Seashore, and in eastern Europe, such as in the Zdarske Hills Protected Landscape Area of Czechoslovakia (see review, particularly of U.S.A. and British practices of conservation, in Russell 1986). The exploration of conservation opportunities is starting to receive attention in some Australian states, notably New South Wales (for example, JRC Planning Services 1986).

An application of the concept of cultural landscape conservation to Tasman Peninsula is demonstrated in the research project covered in the next section. The claim that the peninsula is a cultural heritage landscape of national significance is based not merely on its extensive system of remnant convict sites, but on the high degree to which the landscape itself is redolent of convict occupation. The peninsula is “still today fundamentally a landscape reflecting fifty years of penal policy” (Jack 1984). It was the nineteenth-century penal settlement and its communication routes that effectively set the pattern of town development and roads which are seen today. Further, complementing the more visually dominant evidence of extant convict station buildings and ruins, there are both samples of broader landscapes with attributes which can be traced to penal settlement, like the basalt slopes around Saltwater River originally cleared by convicts to grow wheat, and a host of more subtle features within landscapes, like sandstone quarries, remnants of jetties, and remnants of the timber sleepers which carried a tramway across the flats at the head of Impression Bay at Premaydena.

Most of Tasman Peninsula's convict era historic sites have never been the subject of conservation plans. Commonwealth withdrawal from involvement in the conservation of Port Arthur makes the appearance of such plans less likely than ever. Nevertheless, considerable pressures for change to the landscape of Tasman Peninsula as a whole make it timely for a call to accord recognition to the historic landscape and promote its conservation.

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Recognising the almost total lack of available mechanisms which could be applied to landscape

conservation on Tasman Peninsula, the author began to develop ideas of raising local consciousness of values in the landscape and suggesting how those responsible for land could themselves go about conserving those values. A research project was initiated (with National Estate Grants Program assistance) which was to culminate in the production of the *Tasman Peninsula Landscape Development Manual: Eaglehawk Neck to Port Arthur* (Russell 1985a).

Designed to be distributed widely amongst owners, developers, and managers of Tasman Peninsula's land, as well as its decision-makers, the manual was compiled following the development of a set of methodologies and criteria for landscape documentation and assessment. These cannot be discussed in detail in the present paper, but are available elsewhere (Russell 1985b, 1986); therefore explanation here is limited to general principles only.

The manual embodies three conceptually distinct stages. Stage one involved the provision of information on resources with links to landscape character, that is, an inventory of such resources, including biophysical features which have become standard components of natural resources inventories, like native vegetation, soils, and wildlife. The cultural landscape focus, discussed in the previous section of this paper, led to the identification in the inventory of those cultural components of the landscape which remained as evidence of nineteenth-century penal settlement, with an emphasis on the components exhibiting broader features of the pattern of occupation. An assessment of resources comprised the second conceptual stage of work for the manual. For this phase, the methodologies used were aimed at defining the relative sensitivity (or vulnerability) of resources and/or parts of the landscape to damage from the impacts of likely forms of development, viewed in the light of existing landscape character. Finally, recommendations for the conservation of the landscape were derived, framed so as to be user-specific, that is, to relate to the activities of the different types of landscape users on Tasman Peninsula. Additionally, particular attention was devoted to the needs of the Municipality of Tasman Council, in that sets of recommendations were developed to dovetail with the regulatory provisions of the *Municipality of Tasman Planning Scheme 1979*.

One aim seen as most important, and used to guide research for the manual, was that of directing people's attention to ways of protecting the total landscape. Accordingly, recommendations paid particular heed to the integration of the data and assessments that related to separate resources, and to the need to bring the resulting conclusions to bear on

clearly identifiable local landscapes. Hence the manual organises its information in a standardised format for each of the separate landscape units defined to cover the entire peninsula. To date, work on seven of the total twenty-seven landscape units distinguished has been completed.

There is a long way yet to go to fulfil completely the aim of making available a comprehensive compendium of information on Tasman Peninsula heritage resources and how to protect them. Nevertheless, the seven landscape units already completed include the most complex on the peninsula in terms of land use conflict, as they refer to the localities most intensely developed for tourism (areas adjacent to the Arthur Highway between Eaglehawk Neck and Port Arthur). The manual is being used by the Tasman Council and by some State Government authorities. Additional support from the National Estate Grants Program has also allowed its distribution free of charge to local residents upon request to Tasman Council.

DISCUSSION

The *Tasman Peninsula Landscape Development Manual* is a response, one of the few possible in present circumstances pertaining to heritage protection in Tasmania, to the lack of attention to the landscape of Tasman Peninsula and the loss of its character by attrition. The peninsula's situation is no different from that of other Tasmanian landscapes, but its status as a historical landscape of unique value to the nation provides an enlarged and perhaps keener focus for analysing the nature of the problem.

In fact, the peninsula has offered the setting for a research effort which can claim some pioneering qualities by virtue of the combination of characteristics in its approach (Russell 1986). The development manual is a model for conservation practice applicable to large areas of land (held by many different owners) listed on Australia's Register of the National Estate. Further, the research extends the notion of cultural heritage resources conservation beyond buildings and other structures to the landscape itself; it adopts a "total landscape" emphasis for conservation, that is, a focus on both cultural and natural resources, and it makes direct community responsibility for landscape protection a major emphasis.

In terms of the landscape as a whole, history has not been enough on Tasman Peninsula, but history can offer a powerful focus for the recognition and conservation of values in the landscape, provided that the entire pattern of humanity's interactions with the

land are recognised. In addition, as embodied in the *Tasman Peninsula Landscape Development Manual*, there is a need not only for a wider vision of history and of cultural resources, but also for their values to be integrated with others, such as biophysical and visual resource values, if landscapes are to be conserved at their full worth.

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