

Marketing, Conservation and Interpretation of Historic Sites in the United States of America and the United Kingdom

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There is a growing tendency in America for archaeologists to market and peddle their archaeological product to an awakening public, which is responding by taking an active role in all aspects of conserving archaeological resources. Helen Temple, archaeologist with the New South Wales Department of Environment and Planning, discusses some of her observations of public archaeology in the United States of America and England, gathered while on a Churchill Fellowship in 1985. She also discusses various ways in which archaeological sites can be conserved in-situ and interpreted. Conservation in Australia is relatively new and the public, both informed and lay, is less knowledgeable and therefore less concerned about Australia's archaeological heritage. Archaeological programmes must become more publicly oriented if this trend is to be altered. While the American and English examples may not all be directly applicable, we should heed their efforts and profit from their experience.

INTRODUCTION

When I visited the United States and the United Kingdom in 1985, my terms of reference were very particular. I was interested in current methods of conserving archaeological sites and in ways of displaying and interpreting them. I was interested in the end products. Further, I was curious about the co-existence of archaeology and development. As a public archaeologist within a conservation organisation, my perspective must be to see historic sites as one part of the cultural and natural environment, and I am concerned to see historic sites serve a public as well as an academic purpose.

In the absence of any traditional private patronage, archaeology in Australia has until recently been fostered mostly by universities.¹ The interested amateur has been discouraged from playing anything more than a backseat role. Australian archaeology does not yet have an organised public face and therefore has little organised public support. This is most unfortunate because archaeological sites, historic places and natural areas have an important role to play in public education. People learn more and enjoy learning more, if they can relate learning to things and places, including the by-products of archaeological research.

There is a deep psychological need in society to conserve aspects of its cultural heritage and this need is apparently strengthening as the rate of change accelerates. In maintaining historic and prehistoric sites, we are not only conserving research data bases, but are maintaining some cultural anchors. If archaeology in this country is seen as a costly and narcissistic discipline, then I suggest that it is because we have failed to generate a successful advertising and marketing campaign.

I was impressed by the public orientation of archaeology and history in America and Britain. Cultural history is a public chattel. If we keep monuments, they are kept for the people and without public support for this action at grass roots level, the conservation movement will always be battling uphill. In this respect there is a major difference between the average American and the average Australian. Americans are proud of the history that made America great and equally proud of the products of that history. Their conservation movement is 150 years old, started by citizen groups such as

the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, who struggled in 1858 to keep in public hands George Washington's now famous house, Mt Vernon.² They were successful. Indeed, they were the first conscious beginning of something that is now a very powerful lobby group in the United States, a group which crosses all political persuasions and many socio-economic boundaries. This conservation lobby group is learning, with considerable success, to ride the American system and market its processes and products.

In this paper I concentrate on two major areas: (i) the marketing of archaeology and (ii) *in situ* conservation and site interpretation.

MARKETING

American cultural history and its trappings have been successfully marketed over a number of generations by poets, songsters and movie directors. A very simple historical example can be drawn from Boston, Massachusetts, the home of Mother-goose, Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, the famous Tea-Party and the Boston Red Sox. Revere was a skilled silversmith, a pioneer in early dentistry (who incidentally made George Washington's false teeth), but he is known for a horse ride that he may never have made, to warn American revolutionary troops of imminent British advances. Revere was immortalised in Longfellow's poem, 'The Midnight Ride', because his name rhymed appropriately and he has subsequently been almost deified by American folklore. The Revere legend has become inextricably entwined in the history of America's independence movement and is one of Boston's most marketed commodities. With such things in mind, it is worth considering some specifically archaeological examples.

Annapolis, Maryland

This is a picturesque seventeenth and eighteenth-century sea port that was once the elegant capital of the State of Maryland. The historic centre of Annapolis was saved from the ravages of the 1960s by a private conservation organisation, called Historic Annapolis Incorporated, which still fosters and promotes the city as a living, open-air museum.



'Archaeology in Annapolis' is a research programme directed by Dr Mark Leone from the University of Maryland and funded jointly by the University and Historic Annapolis Incorporated. Leone's team has developed a research design for the whole town, into which each archaeological project fits.³ Each of these projects has a very public face (Fig. 1). The dig sites fly coloured banners and microphones are used to attract visitors. A Baltimore theatre producer has helped to develop an interpretation 'performance' for the field archaeologists, designed to encourage rather than alienate the passing crowds. About 700 visitors a day have been recorded during summer seasons. Costs are low as volunteers supply most of the labour, which is another way of involving people in their own history.

'Archaeology in Annapolis' has worked for a local hotel chain, Historic Inns of Annapolis. During one such project a hypocaust heating system was excavated within the orangery of an eighteenth-century house, now converted to a hotel.⁴ The archaeological features have been retained beneath a thick plate-glass floor and a series of interpretive panels are being erected to explain the visible remains to the hotel guests. These archaeological projects contribute to the propagation of the chain's marketed historic image, raise the consciousness of archaeology, and of course the information is available for academic research.

The eighteenth-century William Paca Garden, behind an important historic building rescued from development, was recreated after archaeologists recovered data from beneath metres of concrete. The garden is the flagship for the city's

Fig. 1: An archaeologist talks to some passing children about her work in Annapolis. In summer, these sites resemble salerooms with multi-coloured banners and microphones.

Fig. 2: A shop with plate-glass windows in the Alexandria arts and crafts centre is the archaeological laboratory, designed to attract members of the public.



conservation movement, and a living museum and nursery for endangered historic flora, but it is also a well publicised testament to the contribution of archaeology to conservation programmes.⁵

'Archaeology in Annapolis' is compiling a very detailed sociological picture of the city and at the same time contributing through public education to a local conservation movement. Mark Leone's message to me was very succinct. The three keys to successful conservation, including public archaeology, are: tax incentives, public programmes and local support.

Alexandria, Maryland

Another city which markets its archaeological product is Alexandria, through the 'Alexandria Research Centre', directed by Dr Pamela Cressy. Alexandria's urban archaeology programme was established as a result of a citizen's initiative, concerned that the 1960s development would cause the destruction of too many sites. The research centre has also developed a research design for the city and work on individual sites contributes to this. The centre is very heavily reliant on volunteer workers and promotes itself through a shop-front laboratory, where the public is encouraged to be part of the artefact analysis for each project (Fig. 2).⁶

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore has fostered the 'Baltimore Centre for Urban Archaeology' which is an extraordinary success story, now being run by the energetic Ms Elizabeth Anderson-Comer. Until a decade ago, this large industrial port had no civic pride and no public identity. Baltimore is now being redeveloped through an enormous urban renewal programme, that has often been seen as the model for Darling Harbour in Sydney. Through the Centre, a small team of city archaeologists has managed to launch such a successful publicity machine that the developers are standing in line to have their sites excavated. One recent example is the site of Cheapside Docks, the eighteenth-century dock in the heart of downtown Baltimore. It was excavated by a small core of paid archaeologists with all available volunteer help in 6 weeks, during which time 12,000 visitors were shown over the site. The developer's contribution of \$5000 provided more publicity than could have been bought through conventional channels, the archaeologists now have a greater understanding of Baltimore's early dock structures, and Baltimore has an increasing interest and pride in its own history.⁷

Jorvik, York

Finally, the jewel of archaeological marketing is Britain's Jorvik Project. This is the name of a famous Viking site museum at Coppergate, York. It would have been a credit to Walt Disney: it is a combination of Tomorrowland and Fantasyland. The museum consists of three parts:

1. A Viking village through which visitors travel as invisible onlookers on a small motorised vehicle. Many aspects and details of village life are represented here and the sounds and smells of the time add an interesting dimension.
2. A recreation of the site excavation, including stuffed archaeologists, and the *in situ* evidence which allowed the construction of the Viking village. This includes an archaeological laboratory.
3. The museum containing the artefacts.

This site museum is so popular that visitors regularly wait one and a half hours before they can get in the doors. The educational messages are few, simple and subliminally transmitted to the visitor, who is under the impression that he or she is at a fun fair. The small shop grosses ten times the money, per square metre, that the Marks and Spencer's Oxford Street store in London does.⁸ Children love it because it uses video, television, remote control and so on: all the media that they feel comfortable with and exhilarated by.

Readers may recoil from the concept but Jorvik has put archaeology on the tourist map in the United Kingdom. Jorvik not only raises people's consciousness but raises vast amounts of money to further archaeological research on other sites.

IN-SITU CONSERVATION AND SITE INTERPRETATION

My interest concerning *in-situ* conservation and site interpretation stems partly from my involvement in the First Government House project in Sydney.⁹ First Government House has become a symbol of the European colonisation of Australia.

The symbol must be explained in the public mind, and the fragmentary remains must evoke the visual images of the site captured by colonial artists. It is clear that the medium-term success of the project will not be judged on the absence of high-rise development, nor the architectural qualities of any building erected on the site. Furthermore, it will not be judged on the quality of the archaeological research. It is the *public* success of the site's interpretation that will determine whether the project as a whole is successful.

Among some people closely involved in the First Government House project, there is an assumption that the archaeological remains will be exposed and on permanent display. Apart from the long-term effect of this exposure on the footings of the building, we also need to consider how evocative and meaningful they will be to the average visitor to the site.

The problems of site interpretation can be illustrated in America, not only in Mark Leone's need to use a theatre producer to develop a performance for his field directors, but also in Ivor Noël Hume's attempts at Martin's Hundred, an important seventeenth-century stockaded farm settlement outside Williamsburg, Virginia. Although an experienced site interpreter,¹⁰ Noël Hume has set up no less than three successive interpretation programmes, each one of which had to be dismantled because the average visitor could not comprehend, in three dimensions, a site whose major remains were post holes.

I would like to illustrate some of the problems and successes of *in-situ* conservation and interpretation of archaeological sites, by examining a number of overseas examples.

Retention of archaeological sites within modern development

One of the most common ways to present archaeological remains is to incorporate them into modern development, usually in the basement of a building. Only sometimes is this really successful.

American examples are rare in the large east coast cities, probably because of the cost and possibly because, once the information has been retrieved from sites, many archaeologists see little advantage in conserving such legacies. No. 85 Broad Street, Manhattan, in New York, is a rare attempt to display the excavated footings of the colonial Dutch *stadt huys*. The remains sit unhappily beneath a plate-glass sheet, which reflects light and is so thick that it is difficult to recognise the features beneath. I understood that during the winter months condensation on the glass further obscures vision.

A more successful example may be seen in Paris, France, beneath the forecourt of Notre Dame. This is known as '*La Crypte Archéologique*'. Here a Roman road was discovered, together with evidence of Roman, Medieval and nineteenth-century buildings. This site, which covers a considerable area, has been retained beneath the forecourt. The display of the various occupational phases relies on walkways, small perspex models, and sophisticated suspended lighting systems which are operated by museum visitors, from each of the twenty or so observation points. Here, lights sequentially illuminate the evidence from each period. This display has been designed for an international audience and requires

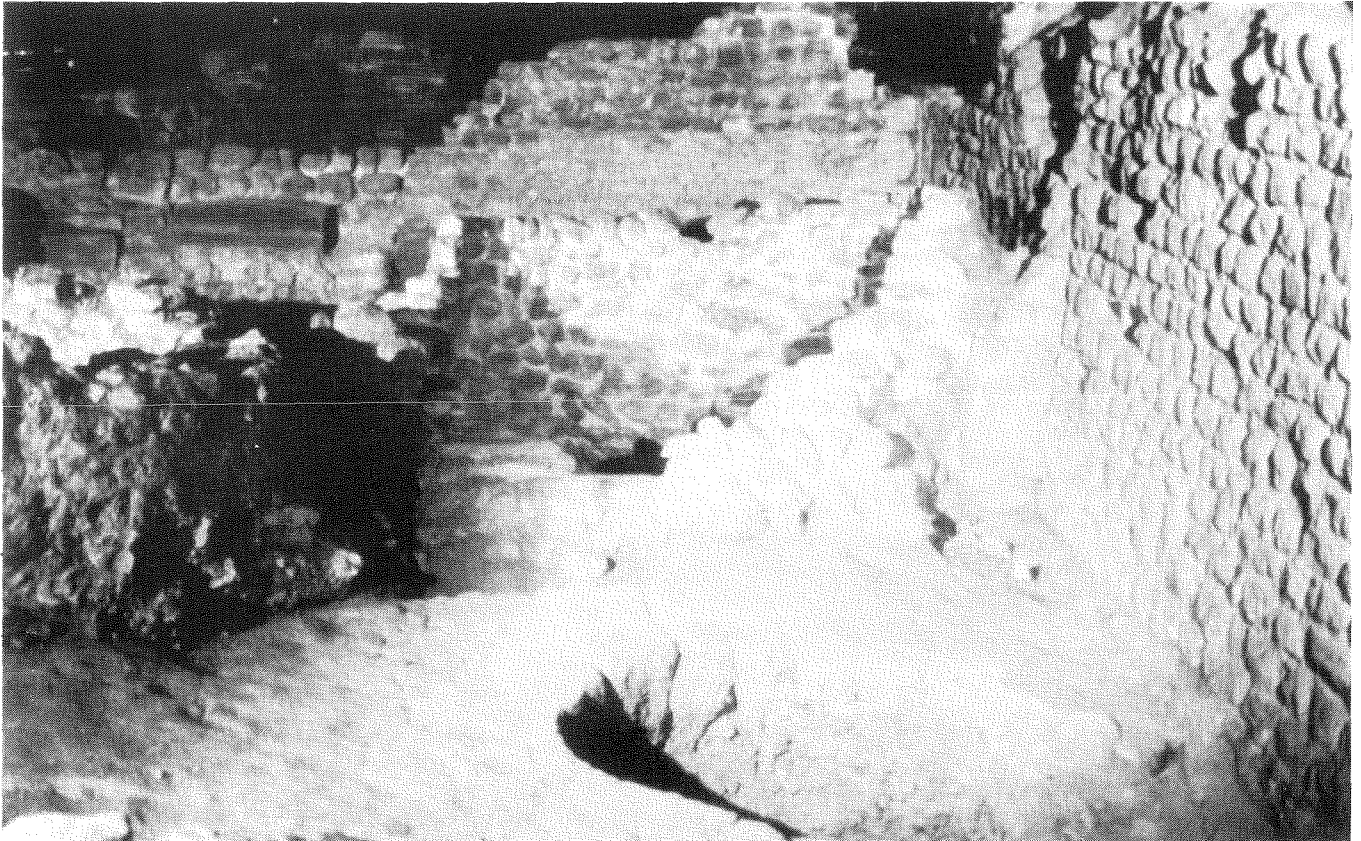
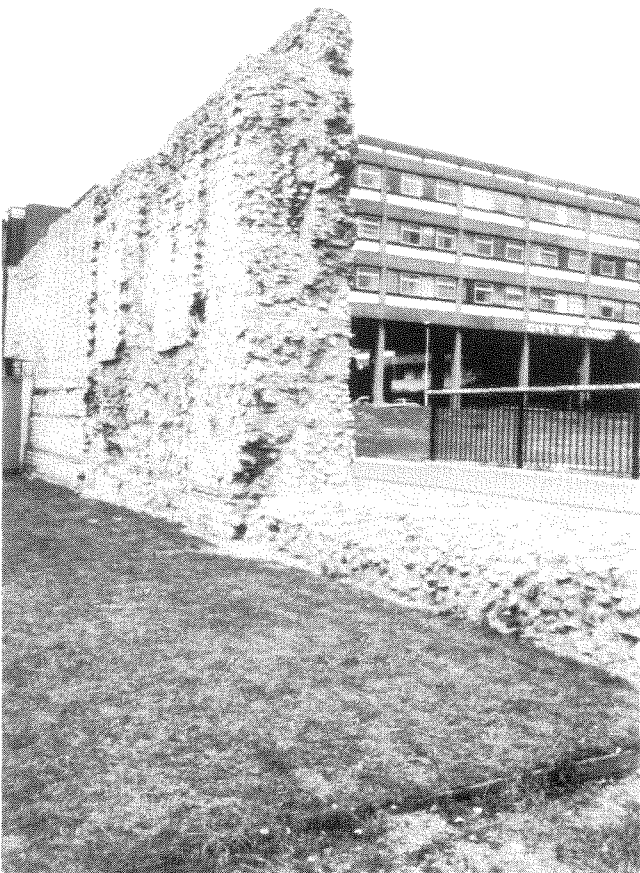


Fig. 3: The illuminated remains of a Roman house by the side of an ancient road, beneath the forecourt of Notre Dame de Paris. This is now part of an exemplary museum display.

Fig. 4: A section of London Wall stands adjacent to a modern building.



virtually no French language. The success of this site relies on the extensive remains, up to 5 metres high in some areas, and on the use of shadow and light to heighten the sense of drama (Fig. 3).

Another successful example of *in-situ* conservation, on a small scale, is the site of the glass works at Jamestown, Virginia, in America. The archaeological remains are retained within a modern building (of unfortunate design which has similarities with a public lavatory). The excavated footings of the kiln are to be seen in tandem with the recreated glass works nearby. This is operated commercially, although producing glass in the traditional manner.

Archaeological remains within an open setting

Archaeological remains may also be preserved in an *open* setting. As such they may be silent reminders of a nation's history, a backdrop for modern construction, or they may be exploited for their own aesthetic effect: the romance of ruins. An example of conservation in an open setting is London Wall, a silent sentry that still guards the remains of ancient London (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, exposure to the twentieth century chemical-filled atmosphere accelerates deterioration. Essential conservation work approximately every thirty years, results in a decreasing percentage of the original. The wall core is not beautiful, but is retained because of its cultural significance.

Interactive displays

Archaeological displays can be made to be interactive between site and audience. This can occur in several ways. For instance, the interpretive programme may involve *living*



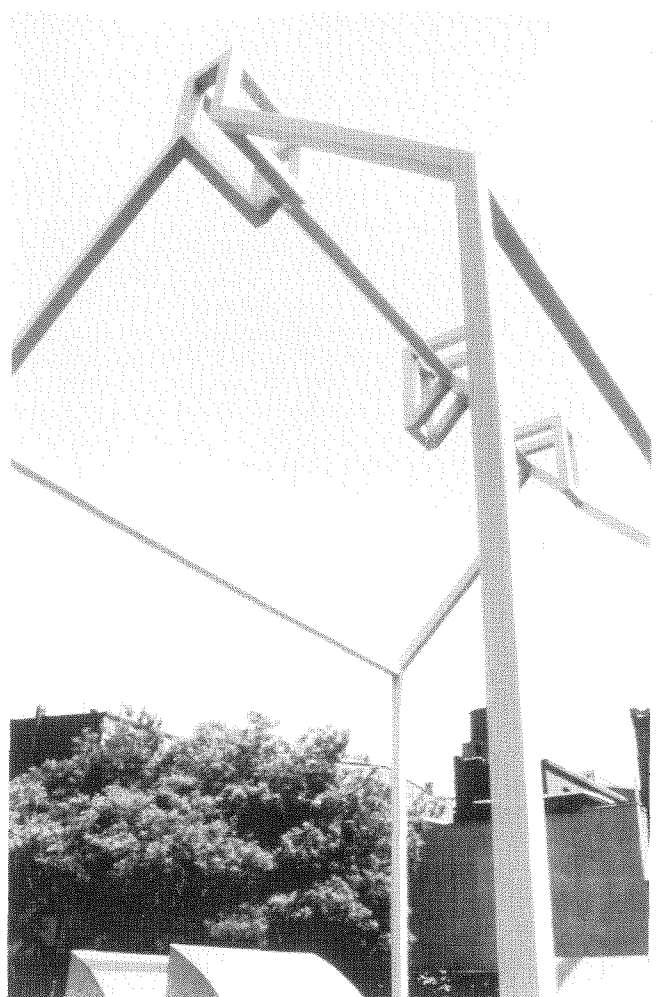
Fig. 5: Sunday luncheon at Godiah Spray's Tobacco Plantation, St Marie's City. Here, actors relive scenes of everyday life for the passing parade of visitors at this open-air museum.

Fig. 6: A 'ghost' frame, representing Benjamin Franklin's house, has been erected on its original site to indicate, in the absence of specific structural details, the spatial dimensions of the house.

history. That is, where the visitor is presented with actors who represent the past on the basis of archaeological and historical research. Usually, visitors are encouraged to ask questions about the times and practices of the site on display. A good American example of this approach is St Marie's City, an open-air museum in southern Maryland. Displays include Godiah Spray's Tobacco Plantation, which has been recreated and is worked in the traditional manner of a seventeenth-century farm of this type (Fig. 5). The British conservation project concerned with the *Mary Rose*, Portsmouth, is also an interactive display of a different kind. Henry VIII's flagship has been raised from the seabed and the public is welcomed into what is virtually an enormous conservation laboratory, to see the hulk as the 24-hour sprays wash the salt from its timbers.

Archaeological reconstruction

Finally, archaeological displays can involve a combination of *in-situ* conservation and reconstruction. An example of this can be seen at Fishbourne, in the south of England, where a huge late Romano-British villa has been retained as a site museum, largely because of the magnificent mosaic floors which decorate most of the rooms. The remains of the villa are housed within a hangar-like building, within which a huge walkway has been suspended. In effect, the museum is an art gallery with the pictures lying horizontally instead of hanging vertically. There is no concept of the volume of the original house and the display does not attempt to convey a sense of the villa as a structure or an understanding of the spatial relationships of the rooms. The site is often presented



as a model of *in-situ* conservation. This must be qualified. To combat the problems of damp and deterioration caused by permanent exposure, parts of the Roman structure have been lifted and re-set in a new, hard-mortar mix. Those parts of the structure which have not been so treated are in an advanced state of decay.

A rather different example of this sort of approach comes from America: Franklin Court, the site of Benjamin Franklin's house in Philadelphia. Franklin built his house behind a double row of terrace houses, accessible through a carriageway from the street. After this death, his relations demolished the house, and the carriageway became a through road with buildings on either side. Fifteen years ago, the American National Parks Service decided to create a memorial to this great statesman and scientist. Knowing virtually nothing of the house's appearance, the original space of the property was recreated, and the archaeological remains preserved *in-situ* with parts selected for display. A museum celebrating Franklin's life was sunk into the ground and a 'ghost' frame erected by architect Robert Venturi, to suggest the dimensions and presence of the house.¹¹ It is now one of the tourist draw-cards of Philadelphia (Fig. 6).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is worth drawing together some of the points that have been raised.

1. *In-situ* conservation

In-situ materials conservation has special problems faced by archaeologists and conservationists internationally and which have been the subject of two ICCROM conferences. These problems must be solved, particularly if archaeological sites are to be incorporated into public interpretation displays. The alternative is to live with the fact that by exposing remains we are accelerating their decay. Certainly, it is no longer enough just to study archaeological sites behind closed doors, in order to produce information for a limited and specialist audience.

2. Public archaeology programmes

With regard to public archaeology, one reason for the development of the American east-coast programmes may stem from a basic characteristic of the United States of America. West of the Mississippi a very high proportion of land (70–80 per cent) is in public ownership and therefore protected to some extent by the Federal preservation laws. The east coast, on the other hand, has a much higher proportion of private land and the Federal laws offer far less protection for archaeological sites and historic places. As a result, scholars and lobby groups have developed other devices.

3. Problems

In this paper I have waved the banner for some aspects of American historic site interpretation and conservation. However, all is not to be admired. Legislation in the United States is far less effective in protecting archaeological sites on private land than in New South Wales where I work. In America, unless a development requires Federal funding, needs land-zone changes, or affects public property, archaeologists (public and private) frequently battle in vain for time to investigate sites in advance of development. If successful, they are often working with an inadequate budget and time constraints.

Most investigative work is done under contract through the Environmental Impact Assessment system. Even the most sophisticated 'high-tech' consultant teams, like that of Dr Joel Grossman in Manhattan, produce reports called irreverently 'grey matter' by the Federal Department of Interior. These are not even reproduced for major research libraries. These contracts allow only for minimal analysis and the artefacts may lie for years awaiting more detailed study or comparative analysis by academic research teams. There are few legal repositories for archaeological artefacts and in Manhattan, for example, material from the *stadt huys* excavation lies partly in Columbia University and partly in archaeologists' basements and garages. This is an all-too-familiar scenario.

Nevertheless, I believe that archaeological programmes, whether undertaken by government, universities or private contractors, should learn from the United States models and develop a strong and conspicuous public orientation. That is, involving and being directed towards the people.

The long-term results of such an approach are various. First, voluntary public participation will significantly reduce the cost of investigations. Second, it will contribute to a general raising of consciousness for environmental conservation as a whole. Third, it may lead directly to a public support for archaeological research and an insistence that archaeological data is either conserved or adequately studied.

It is clear that only the encouragement of concern at a local level will effectively protect the vast majority of archaeological sites.

NOTES

1. The National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, the Heritage Act, 1977, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1975, 1979 and 1985, have all contributed towards the growth of public archaeology in New South Wales. In response to government legislation, archaeological surveys, investigations and conservation programmes have been undertaken by private development companies and public authorities, under the watchful gaze of government conservation staff. This has been running parallel with continuing work by academic institutions.
2. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union of Mount Vernon, Virginia, 1974. *Mount Vernon: An illustrated handbook*, Judd & Detweiler: 8.
3. Verbal advice from Parker Potter, who is the only permanent full-time employee of 'Archaeology in Annapolis'.
4. This is the Calvert House, located on State Circle, Annapolis.
5. William Paca's colonial garden. *Southern Living*, May 1984, reprint and verbal advice from St Clair Wright, Historic Annapolis Inc.
6. Cressy, P. J. & Stephens, J. F. 1984. The city-site approach to urban archaeology. *Archaeology of urban America: The search for pattern and process*, Academic Press: 41–61.
7. Verbal advice from Ms Elizabeth Anderson-Comer, Director of the Baltimore Centre for Urban Archaeology.
8. Verbal advice from Peter Addyman, Director of the York Archaeological Trust for Excavation and Research Ltd.
9. First Government House Site in Sydney is a major initiative by the New South Wales Government. Begun in 1981 as a rescue excavation, a commitment has now been made to retain and commemorate the site.
10. This excavation project has been encapsulated in Noël Hume, I. 1983. *Martin's Hundred*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
11. Verbal advice from Denise Scott-Brown, Partner, Venturi, Rauch & Scott-Brown Architects.