

**Submission
No 215**

**INQUIRY INTO WINDSOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
PROJECT**

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Late last year it was announced that Sydney had won the bid to host the 2020 International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) General Assembly. This winning bid was based on the showcasing of Sydney's Opera House, Blue Mountains National Park and our convict sites and will see more than 1500 heritage experts converge on Sydney.

How embarrassing for Sydney then, that there is a highly significant piece of rare early colonial infrastructure currently on the verge of being destroyed by the RMS's Windsor Bridge Replacement Project, a project that will still be under construction while this General Assembly is being held in 2020.

This is the brick barrel drains that Governor Lachlan Macquarie ordered to be built in 1814 "To Sink and Erect One Sewer in the middle of the Square with Channels leading thereto or to sink and Erect two sewers one on each side of the Square as laid down in the Plan in the possession of His Excellency Governor Macquarie". Some history here: <http://www.cawb.com.au/smugglers-tunnels.html>

Not only is the whole Thompson Square Conservation Area heritage precinct going to lose its uniqueness with the building of a new bridge through it, but it will lose part of the fabric of Windsor with the destruction of the drains. These legendary drains, or Smugglers Tunnels, or Rum Tunnels as they have been known, are part of the mythology of Windsor. There are older residents still alive now, who as youngsters went down the drains, or tunnels. Many locals have an older relation who remembers this or know of someone who can relate their story of the tunnels. As Windsor was so important for feeding the colony of Sydney, shipping here was vital. Andrew Thompson had a shipyard (or two) where he built small ships that could navigate the river and according to the Sydney Gazette Shipping News, his ships sailed back and forth between Windsor and Circular Quay carrying produce and bringing back supplies constantly. It has been suggested that the drains were used for other purposes after they stopped being used as drains. In the 1980s Dr Rex Stubbs invited Archaeologist Edward Higginbotham to investigate the location of the drains. This was not an archaeological dig, just involved looking around the area to try to find the exit of the drains and by talking to locals, to establish the position of the drains. Edward Higginbotham consequently had Thompson Square classed as a Conservation Area so that there could be no unauthorised digging done there, as some locals had been trying to find the drains. From the CAWB website "Illicit rum-running was rife along the Hawkesbury in the early days and older residents recount that kegs of spirits were brought up from the river bank through a tunnel into an excavation in Thompson Square. Access to these "tunnels" is rumoured to be in the basements of Windsor Pizza and The Macquarie Arms."

So in establishing the significance of these brick barrel drains, it beggars belief that they can be destroyed for a bridge project that is flawed in so many ways when they could be saved if a bypass bridge was built well away from this heritage precinct. At the moment, salvage archaeology is being carried out at the Thompson Square lower reserve where the bridge foundations are to be placed. Salvage archaeology is used mainly for development projects, where artefacts are quickly removed from a site before the area is destroyed. Part of a brick barrel drain has been uncovered in December 2017. In spite of locals taking photos through the fence of the dig and seeing the brick work, the RMS denied they had found the drain, but early in the new year as they could no longer

deny it, they posted a wonderful photo they had taken of what was uncovered, which is the sump of the drain. They said archaeologists were trying to uncover more of the drain, but it would be documented then destroyed. The brick barrel drains cannot be removed without pulling them apart. The bricks are very early clay convict bricks with tiny pieces of shell amongst the clay which will easily be damaged as they are fragile. The RMS said they will document these drains and then destroy them as the area has to be dug to bedrock.

Photo of the drain sump, released by the RMS, here: <http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/sydney-west/windsor-bridge-replacement/index.html>

In conclusion, back to ICOMOS. ICOMOS Australia elected a new President in October 2017, Ian Travers who is Senior Associate of Extent Heritage, who happen to be the company carrying out the Archaeological dig for the WBRP at Thompson Square in conjunction with Austral Archaeology. Possibly due to this connection, Ian Travers has since stepped down from his role in ICOMOS. Also last year, one of the Extent archaeologists won an award from ICOMOS. She is working on the WBRP Thompson Square site. Interestingly in 1992 ICOMOS International delegates visited the Hawkesbury as part of the International Advisory Committees Conference in Sydney, the first such meeting to take place outside the northern hemisphere. The then World Heritage Coordinator for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), Henry Cleere suggested that the 'first' such as Thompson Square, Windsor Court House, Ebenezer Church, the Macquarie Arms Hotel etc despite their young age on the world scene were items of world heritage potential as the rest of the world could not identify their 'first' due to wars, invasions and natural disasters. Evidently they saw this area as significant on the world stage.

The ICOMOS General Assembly 2020 is known to Minister Josh Frydenberg who is sitting on the Emergency National Heritage listing submissions for Thompson Square (sitting on them for over one year yet the submissions requested Emergency listing) as it was announced on his website Home Page <http://www.joshfrydenberg.com.au/guest/Default.aspx> "Successful bid for 2020 ICOMOS General Assembly: On 15 December, Australia ICOMOS won the rights to host a global meeting of heritage experts in Sydney in 2020. The Turnbull Government proudly supported this bid to bring the triennial General Assembly of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to our region for the first time. It's great news for Australia, coming just one month after we were elected to the World Heritage Committee. ICOMOS provides expert advice to the World Heritage Committee and nations across the globe. We'll now see more than 1,200 of its members converge on Sydney in three years' time. Our world heritage listed Sydney Opera House, Blue Mountains and Australian Convict Sites in and around Sydney will provide the perfect backdrop!"

Yes a highly embarrassing series of events unfolding which will be announced to the world.

Recommendation: That the WBRP is stopped immediately, that Thompson Square and Windsor Bridge be immediately granted National Heritage listing, and that a bypass is built that will re-direct heavy traffic including 3000+ trucks daily away from the Windsor heritage precinct.