

# *NSW Heritage*

## GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDING OF HERITAGE SITES, BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES



NSW  
Heritage  
Office

**Department of Planning  
Heritage Council of New South Wales**

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

These guidelines are based on a document prepared by Don Godden, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of NSW.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The following guidelines are intended as a checklist for making a photographic record of sites, buildings and structures of heritage significance. They are particularly relevant to the recording of items of industrial or technological significance. They assume that the photographer has an in-depth knowledge of the craft and is fully equipped.

For information on the broader issue of heritage archival records, refer to the Heritage Council and Department of Planning's "How To Prepare Archival Records of Heritage Items" (1994).

## 2 EQUIPMENT

Photographic recording ideally requires a minimum of:

- a medium format camera (6cm x 5cm) or larger, such as a Hasselblad, Linhoff Technicar or a field camera with a rising front;
- a good 35mm camera with a range of lenses, including a 35mm perspective correction lens, 20mm lens, 28 mm lens, 35mm lens, 50 mm lens, 105mm lens and a telephoto lens of 300mm focal length. Only some of these lenses may be needed for any particular assignment;
- a heavy duty tripod;
- two or more flash guns and slave unit;
- a selection of flood lights;
- scale rod for inclusion in the photographs, where appropriate.

The photographer should visit the site at least once before the project commences to determine the equipment which will be needed and to select the type of film. The above list is an indicatio of equipment, some of which may be called upon for various assignments.

## 3 FILM

There is a bewildering range of black and white, colour negative and colour transparency film on the market. Most is of high quality, although certain photographers will prefer a single brand or type of film over another.

**Black and white** is still the preferred medium for archival recording because colour film fades over time. All black and white film should be fine grained, say 50 ISO, although 125 ISO is now regarded as sufficiently sensitive for most purposes.

**Colour slides** should be taken as well as black and white prints because of their usefulness in giving lectures and for providing colour information on items photographed, at least in the short term. Film speed should be the equivalent of Kodachrome 64 (ISO 64). If colour negative is used, prints should be 100 ISO or below.

#### **4 DEVELOPING**

All colour processing should be done by recognised laboratories. For this reason it is recommended that the larger and more established laboratories be used even if they are more expensive than express photo processing shops. Colour processing requires precise control of both chemistry and temperature. Tell the laboratory that the negatives and photographs are for archival purposes.

All black and white negatives should be developed using fine grain developer. For archival developing, the negative needs to be fixed twice. After developing the negative is washed, it is then fixed in the normal manner, it is washed again and fixed a second time with pre-used fixer. The batch of pre-used fixer should not be exhausted. The negatives are washed again, then dried thoroughly and stored.

Details of archival development techniques are available from most large museums.

## 5 COPIES AND STORAGE

All storage must be in archival envelopes, the more expensive of which are the Mylar brand. There is now a range of high density polyethelene envelopes, which are cheaper than Mylar for both negative and slide storage. These are recommended by most US archive departments.

Negatives and slides require a temperature and humidity controlled environment for archival storage. Slides should be stored in boxes, not in envelopes, which can create micro environments and promote fungal growth.

If black and white prints are likely to be needed frequently a second set of negatives could be made. This second set could then be used for printing while the master set remains in archival storage. However, for most recording one set is sufficient.

Two copies of each slide should be taken by the photographer so that one set can be archivally stored and the second set can be used for exhibition or copying. One set should be marked "archival" and the other marked "working copy".

Annotate and cross-reference the negative envelopes, contact sheets, slides and prints using archivally stable ink.

## 6 PHOTOGRAPHIC METHOD

Every photographer has an individual technique. When photographing for the purpose of making an archival record, however, it is the information content, rather than the artistic effect, which is paramount. Photographs of a particular scene should be uncluttered with extraneous material and should emphasise the subject.

The photographer should be aware of all plans and documentary evidence available on a place and should have an understanding of its history and operations. This is especially important with industrial sites. Without this knowledge significant items may not be treated appropriately. If necessary the photographer should be accompanied on the site by a person familiar with the site's heritage significance and the processes related to it.

The preferred shooting method is to proceed from the general to the specific. There are two methods which can be used:

1. In the first method the context photo is taken first, then the structures showing their relationship to each other, followed by the external facades of each building, the relationship of the elevations to each other and to all equipment or relics housed in each space. Internally the main elevation of each room or space should be photographed. Finally, each piece of equipment in each space should be carefully and completely photographed.
2. In the second method, the external content photographs are taken initially and the individual buildings and relics are then photographed in a sequence determined by either g

Whichever method is used the photographer must be aware of the appropriate sequence, and the site must be inspected and the project planned before commencement.

## **6.1 Base Plans**

The photographer must be equipped with a map of the site on which each building or structure is shown. Each building or structure must be given its correct name or it must be denoted by a symbol such as a number or letter of the alphabet. Where there is a number of buildings on a site, it may be necessary to draw each building separately. In some cases each space may have to be drawn separately.

Some photographers like to draw a sketch plan themselves as it increases their awareness of the buildings and their contents.

## **6.2 Scale Rods and Measuring Sticks**

It may sometimes be useful to include a measuring stick placed in the plane of the photograph's subject which will serve as an indication of relative scale. For large scale photographs the stick or rod should be similar to a field surveyor's levelling staff, at least one metre long calibrated in bands from 10 to 100mm wide. For photographs of smaller details prepare a ruler approximately 300mm long with calibrations from 1 to 10mm. The markings on scale rods must be bold to be easily read in the print or slide.

## **6.3 Record of Photographic Method**

Photographic records are taken on behalf of a client and it is essential that the client, or the client representative, is able to review the catalogue and contact sheets and be satisfied that the coverage is complete. Hence a detailed explanation of the sequence in which the photographs were taken must be given in the introduction to the catalogue.

## 7 CATALOGUE

Each individual frame must be catalogued. By adopting a set sequence the catalogue recording is much simpler. It is normal to assign a number or symbol to each type of film, then to number each roll of film and finally to number each frame. Hence, a large format black and white film may be described as No. 1, with 35mm black and white film as No. 2 and colour negative film described as No. 3, etc. Hence the 22nd frame of the fourth roll of colour negative to be exposed would be 3:4:22. Alternatively an alphabetic prefix can be used e.g. *B* for black and white 35 mm; *M* for black and white medium format; *C* for colour slides; eg *C12.27* for the 12th colour film, *B12.13* for the 12th black and white 35 mm film.

It is normal practice to have a catalogue sheet and enter as much information as possible in the field. Further annotation may be made off-site if required. This may be done when the developed and printed film is available or it may be done simply by reference to the original field notes. The catalogue sheet is then typed. The typed version then becomes the film catalogue and is stored with the negatives and all copies of the contact sheets.

When cataloguing information for each exposed frame it is essential to record data in a consistent manner. Again different photographers will vary the way in which they enter information in the catalogue. It is important that the method of entering remains the same throughout a project.

A plan of the site, of each building and of each space within each building should be obtained and each frame exposed should be entered directly on that plan. Each entry should show the position of the camera and the direction in which it was fired (see Appendix A). The nomenclature should be identical to that used for the catalogue sheets. Normally a map of the site or a plan of a building should be lodged with the catalogue sheet and contact sheet. The plan should include a north point.

It is recommended that catalogue sheets be specially prepared for each project giving the name of the site, the photographer's name, the type of camera, type of lenses, type of film, roll number and the description of each frame (see Appendix B).

## **8 TECHNIQUE**

### **8.1 Context Photographs**

Each site or place should be recorded in its context. This means that the surrounding landscape with the site and structures in it should be photographed from several distant points. Buildings, rivers, landform and other items should all be included and their relationship with the subject defined. In some cases this will require 8 to 10 frames of each type of film.

### **8.2 Relationship of Buildings on the Site to Each Other**

The spatial relationship of each structure to another, and to surrounding buildings or structures should be shown. This will allow functional connections to be recognised. Quite often, this can be done by placing the camera where four or five buildings are in view and taking a series of shots radiating from the point where the photographer is standing. On a complex site five or six such positions may be required before each building is defined in its relationship with those surrounding it. In other cases, one or two shots are all that are required.

Include external elements such as boundary fencing, trees, gardens, roads and paths in your record of the site.

### **8.3 Individual Buildings or Structures**

External photographs should be taken of each facade with a normal perspective correcting or telephoto lens where possible. Wide angle lenses tend to distort the perspective of building facades.

The detail of each facade should be approached in a logical manner usually working from the upper left-hand corner to the bottom right. Details such as eaves, soffits, rainwater heads, downpipes, window reveals and sills, doorways and steps, and balustrades will all require individual treatment.

Where individual features are outstanding because of their form, texture, historic nature or condition, several photographs of the one item may be necessary. This may include photographs taken from distances as close as a few centimetres, in which case a macro lens will be required.

### **8.4 Internal Spaces**

Internal spaces of a building are usually more complex and in many cases appear bewilderingly so. Here a knowledge of the operation of the space is essential. Photographs should be taken in a sequence to show all internal elevations, including floors and ceilings where possible. Special attention should be placed on structural elements. Do not forget spaces which are difficult to get to, such as the roof, basements, shafts and underfloor spaces.

### **8.5 Items and Relics**

Individual relics such as the machinery on an industrial site should be photographed perpendicular to each face and from each corner. Where possible they should also be photographed from above or from a high vantage point. Normally each item is completed photographed before the photographer moves to the next one.

Relics usually exist as assemblages, collections or systems and this should be taken into account by the photographer.

An assemblage is a relic or structure including all the artefacts, tools and items normally associated with it when it was operating. In the case of a workshop machine, it would include the spanners and wrenches used to tighten nuts, the tools needed to adjust gears or belts, the safety screens which prevent contact with moving parts and, if applicable, samples of completed or partially completed work. It would also include signs, pipework and associated services.

The term collection describes a number of relics or structures which belong to a group because they perform the same function or produce the same finished product. Items in a collection are usually photographed concurrently.

A system is more than a collection of artefacts. It is an operational group of related relics or structures which cannot function effectively if any of them is removed. Where a system is being recorded the sequence in which items are photographed will be determined by the operation of the system.

Photographers who have not worked extensively in recording buildings and sites should be walked through the complex before work begins by someone who knows the processes related to the site.

## **9 ACCUMULATED CULTURAL MATERIAL**

On some sites accumulated cultural material (rubbish) may be so distracting that it has to be cleared before photography can be meaningfully undertaken. Details may be partly obscured or completely hidden and a clean up is essential. This is particularly necessary if the site has been vacant for some years and is subject to weed growth, bird infestations, squatters and vandalism.

Care should be taken not to disturb materials that are a legitimate part of the historic record. Material which appears disruptive to the photographer's eye and which belongs to a structure or relic, such as an oil can, may be relevant to the operation of the machine and should not be moved. It may, however, be repositioned if such action will not compromise the relationship of items within the assemblage.

## 10 RESULTS

When the survey is complete the minimum requirements should be:

### 10.1 For all photographic archives

- Two sets of catalogue sheets, photographic plan sheets and supplementary maps or plans;
- A very brief report or introduction which explains the purpose of the report, gives a brief description of the subject and details the sequence in which photographs were taken. The report may also address the limitations of the photographic record and may make recommendations for future work;
- The report should also include the name, contents, location and status of supplementary sources concerning the subject, including both published and unpublished material.

### 10.2 For Black and White Film

- A set of archivally developed and numbered negatives in strips and stored in archival envelopes;
- Two sets of contact (proof) sheets, labelled and cross-referenced to the catalogue sheets;

The black and white negatives, one set of contact sheets, one set of prints and one set of catalogue sheets and supplementary maps and plans and the brief report should be stored together in a public archive. One set of contact sheets, one set of catalogue sheets and supplementary maps or plans and the brief report should be stored together in a second archive (perhaps the client archive).

### 10.3 For Colour Transparencies or Slides

- Two sets of colour slides, numbered, labelled and cross-referenced to the catalogue sheets, stored in archival slide envelopes;

One set of colour slides with catalogue sheets, supplementary maps and plans and the brief report should be stored in an appropriate public archive. A second set of slides with catalogue sheets, supplementary maps and plans and the brief report should be stored in another appropriate archive (perhaps the client archive).

### 10.4 For Colour Prints

- A set of numbered negatives, labelled and cross-referenced to the catalogue sheets, in cut s
- Two sets of prints (postcard size) with the film and frame number printed in permanent ink on the back of each print, labelled and annotated;

The negatives for colour prints, one set of prints, one set of catalogue sheets with supplementary maps or plans and the brief report should be stored together in a public archive. One set of prints, one catalogue sheet with supplementary maps or plans and the brief report should be stored in a second archive.

**APPENDIX A**

**PHOTOGRAPHIC PLAN SHEET**

<b>Site name:</b>		
<b>Photographer:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Camera:</b>	<b>Lens:</b>	<b>Job no:</b>
<b>Film type:</b>		<b>Processing:</b>
<b>Film number/ Reference:</b>		<b>Page of</b>



