Uncoverings 1993

Volume 14 of
the Research Papers of
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Laurel Horton

❖ ❖ ❖

Quiltmaking in Australia and the 1988 Bicentennial Celebrations

Emma Grahame

The Australian Bicentennial of 1988, and the protest it inspired among Aboriginal and other activists, had far-reaching effects on all forms of cultural production in Australia, including quiltmaking. I examined a variety of written sources, and many Bicentennial quilts to ascertain what the effects were on quiltmaking. My study of the publications of the various states' Crafts Councils 1982–1989, the magazine Down Under Quilts *1988–1992,* The Template, *journal of The Quilters' Guild Inc., 1987–1992, and the Guild's extensive clippings files 1985–1989, revealed that the Bicentennial precipitated enormous activity in quiltmaking at every level from local to national. This greatly boosted the popularity, skills base, organization, sophistication, and public visibility of quiltmaking in Australia. Individual and group quilts made to mark the Bicentennial show clear trends in design and content which reveal some of the national, local, and historical images important to Australian quiltmakers in that year. National events such as the first National Quilt Symposium, and the national exhibition* Quilt Australia 88, *gave Australian quiltmaking a focus and cohesion which might otherwise have taken years to develop. The benefits of the 1988–inspired expansion of quiltmaking are now manifested in Australia's vibrant quiltmaking subculture.*

In 1988 Australia marked the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the first English colonists in Australia. Up until quite recently this event has universally been described in Australian history as the beginning of a process of allegedly peaceful settlement. Due to the struggles of Aboriginal people, and the work of historians concerned to reveal the disastrous consequences of colonization upon the origi-

nal inhabitants of the continent, this description has become contested.[1] Many people now view the arrival of the English as the beginning of an invasion, a view which makes any celebration of such an event at best complicated, at worst impossible. Thus the Bicentennial of 1988 provoked protest and questioning, by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, in much the same way as the recent 500th Anniversary of Columbus's landing in America aroused controversy over the effects of the landing and subsequent invasion of that continent upon native American peoples. At the same time, there was a huge outpouring of nationalist and patriotic feeling, and for most Australians, the whole year was suffused with feelings of celebration and national pride. While the political battles over the revision of Australian historical orthodoxy continue, there is also a need for some examination of the effects of the Bicentennial celebrations themselves.

The celebrations, while attended with controversy in relation to Aboriginal issues, included a widespread and diverse range of activities from large-scale public events to very small local and personal initiatives. The Australian Bicentennial Authority, set up by the Federal Government to oversee the year's events, registered over twenty-five thousand events and activities on its data base.[2] A large amount of funding was available to approved projects from local, state, and national Bicentennial committees. One of the common manifestations of the Bicentennial fever was the making of quilts, mostly by groups, but also by individuals. Some of these projects gained partial government funding through local Bicentennial commitees; more were independently initiated and financed, resulting in quilts which were to be donated to local councils, libraries, hospitals, and similar institutions, and hung in public spaces. Many quilt exhibitions were dubbed Bicentennial, and caught, as did so much else, the spirit of national celebration and self-congratulation so pervasive at that time. There were of course some quiltmakers who attempted a more introspective and ambiguous searching after identity and meaning.

In researching this paper I have examined the Crafts Council publications of the various Australian states (1982–1989), the extensive clippings files of The Quilters' Guild Inc., gathered for them by

a commercial clippings service from metropolitan and local papers all over Australia (1985–1989), the Australian quiltmaking magazine *Down Under Quilts* (1988–1992), and The Quilters' Guild Inc. journal, *The Template* (1987–1992). I have also consulted my field notes, taken as a participant/observer at many quilt-related events and meetings over the past four years, and my records of interviews and discussions with quiltmakers, mostly based in Sydney.

The effect of the Bicentennial on Australian quiltmaking as a whole cannot be underestimated. Quiltmaking became one important expression of the feelings engendered by the Bicentennial for a number of reasons. Firstly, it had been an integral part of the American Bicentennial just twelve years previously, and the upsurge of interest at that time was part of the motive force for the Australian quilt revival. So Australian quiltmakers already felt a connection between Bicentennials and quiltmaking. Secondly, quiltmaking skills have a long history and lineage of their own, which is an important part of their attraction for women, who value the sense of connection their quiltmaking gives them with the women of the past and of the future. This made quiltmaking seem an ideal way in which to commemorate a historical event, or to celebrate the (perceived) continuity of Australia over the two hundred years since the arrival of white people.

The third factor was the relative ease of creating a group or community project in this medium, both because of the particular possibilities of quiltmaking (such as construction in separate blocks, although this was not the only sort of quilt undertaken), and because basic sewing skills are still widely practiced among women who are not (yet) quiltmakers. Finally, groups which undertook taxing Bicentennial quilt projects found the tasks generated great cohesion and a sense of achievement. The growth in numbers, organizational strength, and confidence among quiltmakers in Australia which has occurred since 1988 is evidence for the importance of this event in the history of the quilting revival in Australia.

This history is still to be written. Margaret Rolfe's pioneering book *Patchwork Quilts in Australia*[3] has taken the story to the end of the second world war. When she began that project, it was thought impossible to find out anything much about Australian quilts: Austra-

lia was thought to have little of a quiltmaking tradition and even less in the way of surviving quilts. Despite Rolfe's documentation of many old quilts, it is true that in Australia, there was no mass tradition of quiltmaking and patchwork, such as there was in the United States. The milder climate, ready availability of manufactured woolen blankets, and small population meant that fewer quilts were made. The extremes of temperature, humidity, and light in Australia, and the dearth of storage space in most Australian houses, which lack attics and basements, meant that few quilts survived.[4] Most of today's quiltmakers had never seen or heard of a patchwork quilt of the kind they are making now, until they began to make one. So in Australia, the quiltmaking revival is not a question of the re-evaluation and popularization of a set of relatively well-known craft skills and aesthetics, but the creation of a new kind of craft community.

Histories of the crafts are only beginning to be written in Australia today, and quiltmaking rarely features because of its largely non-professional basis.[5] For many reasons, including the reluctance of the public to buy quilts at prices which accurately reflect the time, skill, and artistry involved in their production, quiltmaking has not been so successful in becoming a studio-based professional craft practice as, say, pottery or jewelry. There are, of course, a small number of professional quiltmakers in Australia, but within the craft establishment they tend to be subsumed under the heading "fiber artists," so that the specificities of their practice, and their connections with the large and vibrant non-professional community of quiltmakers of which they are part, are largely ignored. Many more of our well-known quiltmakers work part-time on their quiltmaking, and are otherwise found teaching, or running shops, if not working at another job altogether.

The Quiltmaking Revival

Rolfe's work has produced a definitive account of Australian quiltmaking up to 1945, and she has outlined the kinds of quilts generally made here. These are significantly different from the common styles of antique quilts found in North America. Most early Austra-

lian quilts are unquilted. Many are pieced in the English style, over papers, or in the Victorian crazy style. Other kinds of quilts found in Australia include embroidered quilts, "waggas" made from woolen cloth or suiting samples, and pieced medallion-style quilts.[6]

Modern quiltmaking in Australia began in earnest in the late 1970s, largely seeded from the United States. Early active quiltmakers were often women who had spent time in the United States, whose husbands were posted or studying there, and who were unable to work due to family commitments or the strict American labor laws. For these women, going to a quilt group in an unfamiliar city was a way of finding friends and making contact with other women. When they came home to Australia, some started groups themselves, or brought their more advanced skills and ideas to local groups. Other influential quiltmakers were Americans living in Australia, either with a history of quiltmaking before they came to Australia, or perhaps seizing upon something seen as specifically American to ease their separation from the United States.

In my research I have come across only one well-known contemporary quiltmaker who learned the skills of American-style patchwork in Australia from family members. Megan Terry's mother and aunt made patchwork quilts without papers, using American piecing techniques from the late1950s, and Megan herself made quilts as early as 1964.[7] She has become an eminent quiltmaker and founding president of the Australian Quilters' Association. Her quilts and garments have been widely published and exhibited in Australia and overseas. Every profile and introduction to Megan's work emphasizes how early Megan came to the techniques of quiltmaking, and this in itself shows how unusual such a personal history is.[8]

Some Australian quiltmakers taught themselves American piecing from books, as did Ilma Hinwood, a quilter since the 1930s, whose father, a publisher, imported American books.[9] Elisabeth Kruger, a younger artist, also learned from books. Her one-woman show of quilts in Canberra in 1978 was important in creating the interest which led to the setting up of The Patchwork Group (later Canberra Quilters Inc.) in 1979.[10]

If quiltmaking in Australia came largely from personal contact with the situation in the United States, it soon gained momentum,

creating a keen group of adherents eager to apply and reinterpret what they had learned from American models. Many Australian quiltmakers were involved in the craft revival of the 1960s and 1970s, and some still have spinning wheels, looms, lacemaking cushions, crosstitch and tapestry projects, macrame yarn, silk paints, batik equipment, linocut printing equipment, and even potter's wheels in their garages and storerooms. For these women, quiltmaking quickly eclipsed other interests, and became a passion. I am currently researching the reasons for this in another project.

In the early 1980s quiltmaking quickly became more organized. Large distances and lack of communication between quiltmakers in different states and cities led to the independent development of different guilds. Western Australia saw the first quilt exhibition in 1976 at the Yorke Fair. The exhibition, inspired by the United States Bicentennial, led to the formation of the WA Quilters Association in October 1976. Their first exhibition was held in 1979 in Fremantle. The group grew slowly, starting a newsletter and establishing a library in 1981. Thirteen thousand people attended their 1984 exhibition.[11]

In Victoria, the Victorian Quilters Association was formed in 1979, after an exhibition and classes held by Megan Terry. By 1983 the group, unaware of other groups, had changed its name to the Australian Quilters Association, had 360 members and was running workshops, exhibitions, a newsletter *Quilters Patch*, and a supply business.[12]

In New South Wales, the most populous state in Australia, The Quilters Guild Inc. had its first meeting in 1982. Its exhibitions were well attended and by 1984 the Guild had a membership of over six hundred. It developed strong connections with many local groups in Sydney and rural New South Wales, although membership is individual, and not through a group affiliation or chapter system.[13] Other state groups followed. The Quilters Guild of South Australia held their inaugural exhibition in mid-1985.[14] Many more informal local groups existed, many of which had grown out of classes held at colleges of technical education, or at the quilt shops which were beginning to appear to supply this growing craft.

In 1985 the National Quilt Seminar was held in Victoria by the

Ovens Valley Patchworkers and Quilters Group. Part of its rationale was to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the state of Victoria, but participants came from all states except Queensland. The week-long seminar was the first of its type in Australia, and aroused great interest, though nothing more on the same scale was organized until 1988.[15]

By the mid-1980s the basis existed for the explosion of quiltmaking which was to take place in the later part of the decade. Even remote areas like Alice Springs, in central Australia, had well-established quilt groups, and the quiltmaking was particularly strong in rural Queensland where great distances and a scattered population seemed no impediment to a vibrant quiltmaking community. However, quiltmaking was (and is) by no means a practice unmarked by ethnic and class distinctions. In perusing the quilt-related publications, it is impossible to ignore the general impression that quiltmakers in Australia are generally white and Anglo-Celtic, and that quilt groups seem to flourish more in middle-class suburbs in the cities, and in prosperous country towns.

There are few quiltmakers of Aboriginal descent, although Aboriginal women are involved in many textile printing and painting enterprises, and have a rich history and tradition of decorative art.[16] There are exceptions of course. *Down Under Quilts*, September 1988, ran a story on "Winmarra Wirrama," a quilt made as a practical measurement and calculation exercise by a group of Aboriginal women doing a mathematics course at their local College of Technical and Further Education.[17] The article is the only one on Aboriginal quilters in five years of *Down Under Quilts*.

The Bicentennial of 1988 and Quiltmaking

In March 1988 the first issue of *Down Under Quilts* appeared: the first commercial quilting magazine to be published in Australia. Australian quilters were very familiar with the major American magazines to which many subscribed, individually or through their groups and guilds. Produced by two women inexperienced in publishing and layout, *Down Under Quilts* was very well received despite, or per-

Figure 1. "And in the beginning" by the Peel Cottage Quilters of Tamworth NSW shows an idealized cultivated landscape surmounted by the Australian flag. Photo courtesy of the Quilters' Association.

haps because of, its less polished production and approach. By the third issue it was selling four thousand copies, almost half of those by subscription.[18] Perhaps because it seemed more accessible and less intimidating than the very professional and remote American publications, it quickly gained a large amount of reader input and featured many pictures of and letters about local quilts, many of them Bicentennial projects.

Many local and community quilt-related projects started as a result of the Bicentennial or were accelerated or funded because of it. From my examination of the clippings files, which include most Australian local papers, there were at least twice as many quilt exhibitions advertised or reported in 1988 as in 1987 and 1986 put together. Well over sixty specifically Bicentennial quilts were made by groups. Many more quilts were made upon the theme of the Bicentennial or national identity by individual quiltmakers, reflecting the important presence of the idea of the Bicentennial in the minds of Australians during that year. Some of these individual quilts ap-

peared in exhibitions, particularly in the national exhibition *Quilt Australia 88* held by The Quilters Guild Inc., which took Australia as its theme. This exhibition will be discussed further below.

Groups from all over Australia, but particularly from rural areas, made group quilts, most of which were presented to local municipal or shire councils or local institutions for permanent public display. Geographical area was a basic principle in the conception of most of these quilts, accounting for the large numbers of quilts which were given to the municipal or shire councils. The other basic structuring concept in most of the quilts was a consciousness of local history, generally a post-colonization history of settlement and development. As a result of this, many now hang in local museums or historic houses. Almost all of the quilts portray a history shorn of conflict with and injustice to Aboriginal people, although some contain references to the trials of the (white) pioneers. Where Aboriginal motifs do appear they are generic and appropriated images, and usually unrelated to the Aboriginal people of the particular area being portrayed. Such images tend to be used as emblematic of the whole Aboriginal history of a place, amounting to over forty thousand years of habitation, where two hundred years of white history is carefully shown in stages of development. I have found no evidence of particular Aboriginal groups or their specific images being researched for quilts, despite the amount of information available on the various Aboriginal presences in Australia. Knowledge of the diversity of Aboriginal groups in Australia prior to colonization is a recent phenomenon among white Australians, who have tended to overlook the fact that Aboriginal groups had territories, languages, and belief systems at least as diverse as those of the peoples of Europe, for example. Theirs was not, and is not, a monoglot or monolithic culture.

More recently, there has been discussion in Australia of the ethical problems involved in white artists using Aboriginal imagery which may have personal, spiritual, or sacred importance in Aboriginal society. Aboriginal people have protested against their images being desecrated, stolen, and displayed for people who are not entitled to see them. There has also been some conflict within Aboriginal communities about the ways in which their sacred iconography may be

adapted for use in items for general sale or display.[19] This may be a reason why some white quilters avoid Aboriginal imagery in their work, despite the power—and increasing popularity—of much Aboriginal art.

The only image of Aboriginality which is used in a more careful way is that of the Aboriginal flag, a well-known and graphically powerful symbol, which appears on several individual Bicentennial quilts. Its colors, red, black, and gold, are also now generally seen as signifiers of Aboriginality by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. The flag and colors are symbols of a contemporary and politicized Aboriginality, however, which cannot easily be used to signify timelessness, or prehistory, in the way that other more traditional Aboriginal imagery has been. For this and other reasons, the Aboriginal flag rarely appears on Bicentennial group quilts.

Quiltmakers are no more ignorant of the continuing horrors of Aboriginal/white contact in Australia than most non-Aboriginal Australians. The Bicentennial aroused strong protest from Aboriginal people and others precisely because of the historical amnesia it promoted in many fields, and quiltmaking was no worse than any other. I am not imputing bad intentions to any groups of quiltmakers, merely seeking to interpret Bicentennial quilts as expressions of the dominant majority view of the celebration of the Bicentennial, which surfaced in many different kinds of cultural production during 1988. Paradoxically, though, the clarity with which the Bicentennial articulated the amnesiac view of Australian history has since made it impossible to ignore Aboriginal views, and the high profile of Aboriginal protest during 1988 has permanently changed Australian understandings of our history.

The vast majority of Bicentennial quilts were pictorial. Typically, they attempt to depict both historical and contemporary local scenes, in fabric. Landscapes and historic buildings are often shown. Other recurring motifs included vignettes or symbols of local industries and agricultural products, coats of arms, flags, and ideal or typical citizens undertaking local activities. Most quilts were made in variations of the multiple block style, with some superimposing pictorial blocks onto a landscape or other figurative background. This style of quilt possibly required less design confidence (though perhaps not

Figure 2. "200 Flags" by Alison Muir attempted to show the countries, companies, and events which influenced Australia over two hundred years through flags. The Aboriginal flag appears slightly right of center. Photo courtesy of the Quilters' Guild, Inc.

less design skill) than an overall pictorial design, and may have been easier to organize. Of the few quilts designed as pictorial maps, or complex collections of local features without a block structure, most were designed by individuals, even commissioned artists, and then carried out by groups.

Some quilts, made by rural groups, focussed completely on landscape, portraying one—usually idealized—scene, framed in local fauna or other motifs. In these quilts, historical consciousness is less evident, remaining only in the assumption of the timelessness of the landscape. This itself is strange as most such quilts show a cultivated agricultural landscape, a very recent phenomenon in the history of the Australian continent, in most rural areas dating from much later than 1788.[20]

The smallest group of Bicentennial group quilts are those with an abstract or thematic treatment of their area, perhaps, predictably,

because of the difficulty of agreeing on any one such approach within a group. One quilt, from Coleraine, Queensland, simply and effectively depicted local wildflowers, eschewing any more sweeping or obviously meaningful statement, but this is an exception among group quilts.[21]

What general comments can be made about such a diverse group of quilts? The overall impression is one of great seriousness—though we were all called upon to celebrate, the Bicentennial allowed for little humor or levity, and the quilts reflect this. This must also be due to the consciousness of the quiltmakers that their quilts were intended to be displayed in public places, where seriousness is the usual mode of behavior and frivolity and humor discouraged. Many groups were also acutely conscious of their role in making the quilt as a historical document in itself, and were determined to leave nothing out. Thus we see quilts incorporating scores of motifs symbolizing every industry, historic site, and natural feature of whole districts. The Hunter's Hill quilt, a pictorial map of a historic Sydney suburb, grew to enormous size in this attempt, its finished size being three meters by nine meters (about ten feet by twenty-four feet).[22]

What were the effects of the enormous effort devoted to Bicentennial quilts in 1988, for quiltmaking as a whole in Australia? I will outline a number here, although I am sure this is not an exhaustive list. Firstly, some groups were especially formed for their project and have continued after its completion. Many women introduced to quiltmaking through a Bicentennial project for their local school or area have gone on to become accomplished quiltmakers in the intervening years. Alison Schwabe was an embroiderer, recruited to do some machine embroidery on a Bicentennial quilt in Western Australia. Now a quiltmaker, living in the United States, she has since had quilts exhibited in "Visions," in San Diego, 1992, and other American shows.[23]

Secondly, many groups were enlarged due to the local interest in such projects. A great many Bicentennial quilt projects received coverage in their local and state newspapers, bringing unprecedented publicity to quiltmaking groups. Organizing and executing high-quality group quilts meant that groups had to develop new skills and expertise. Some of these groups have produced other public quilts in

the years since 1988, such as the Melbourne University Quilt produced by the Hamilton Quilters of Victoria.[24]

Thirdly, a large number of groups organized inaugural exhibitions, or exhibitions much bigger than their previous ones, as part of the presentation of their Bicentennial quilts or as fundraisers for materials. In this way, quilt groups became vastly more confident and competent in publicizing, organizing, and presenting quiltmaking to the public.

Fourthly, there has been a huge increase in public knowledge about quiltmaking and in the physical presence of quilts in public places, as Bicentennial quilts hang in Council Chambers, Arts Centers, libraries, hospitals, schools, and local galleries all over Australia. While quiltmaking remains one of the lesser-known forms of cultural production, 1988 produced a great surge in its public profile.

The Armidale Quilt Symposium and Quilt Australia 88

Two major quilt-related events in 1988 gave quiltmaking national coverage and, at the same time, brought quiltmakers from all over Australia together in new ways. Both events broke new ground for Australian quiltmaking. These events were the Armidale Quilt Symposium and Exhibition, a three-week-long residential symposium with workshops, lectures, and other activities, which brought out overseas tutors and involved over 900 quiltmakers, and the national exhibition, *Quilt Australia 88* organized by The Quilters' Guild Inc. of New South Wales.

The Symposium, hosted and organized by the Quilters and Patchworkers of New England, was inspired by the National Quilt Seminar held by the Ovens Valley Patchworkers and Quilters in Victoria in 1985. This had been a great success, and other residential workshops and conferences had been held in the intervening years, most notably the Quilt Experience series in central Queensland. However, no event had previously attempted the national profile of the Armidale Symposium. Held in April 1988, at the University of New England, in northern New South Wales, it was well placed to at-

Figure 3. "Our part of the country" by the Wagga Wagga Quilters' Group of NSW combines the idealized landscape with a collection of national and local emblems.

tract quiltmakers from New South Wales and Queensland, but in fact women came from all over the country and from New Zealand to attend. Eminent quiltmakers and teachers from the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia gave workshops and lectures; and for all the participants, the Symposium was a mine of ideas and inspiration. The Symposium has become an annual event, although its venue has changed several times. It remains a pre-eminent event for Australian quiltmakers.

For Americans, an event like this may not seem very unusual, but in Australia it had a large impact, inspiring some participants to make stronger connections with others in Australia and overseas, and to organize other residential quilt-related events and workshops in their own areas. It provided a major infusion of new techniques, design ideas and possibilities, and new influences to Australian quiltmaking.

Only a few months later, in June 1988, The Quilters' Guild Inc. held their long-awaited Bicentennial Exhibition, *Quilt Australia 88*. This was the result of five years work within the Guild, and in negotiation with the Australian Bicentennial Authority. The exhibition

included three separate initiatives: a set of traveling exhibitions of small quilts, called *Quilts Covering Australia: the Suitcase Exhibitions;* a schools banner project, involving scores of schools Australia-wide; and a large Exhibition held in Sydney, which included a display of historic Australian quilts curated by Margaret Rolfe, as well as over a hundred contemporary quilts.

Quilt Australia 88 was a huge undertaking, which stretched Guild resources to the limit, but it resulted in unparalleled exposure for The Quilters' Guild Inc. and for quiltmaking in general. The traveling exhibitions toured the country for nearly five years, and new "suitcase" exhibitions are currently in preparation. The schools banner project introduced thousands of children to quiltmaking skills. The Exhibition was accompanied by a full-color book, funded by the Women's Programme of the Australian Bicentennial Authority. Described by the Guild President as "the only comprehensive col-

Figure 4. Winner of the "Political" category" in the Quilt 88 Show. Jan Irvine's quilt "Aerodrome," touched on some of the contgentious issues of the Bicentennial, and included the Aboriginal flag inside the windsock. Photo courtesy of the Quilters' Guild, Inc.

lection of Australian quilts to be published,"[25] it provided a record of the show for Australian quiltmakers who could not see it, and for quiltmakers overseas unfamiliar with Australian work. This was a major departure from the ephemeral nature of previous shows.

Very conscious of the exhibition's status as an official Bicentennial event, The Quilters' Guild Inc. devised categories within the general theme of Australia's Bicentennial, which are indicative of the special considerations of the time and have not been repeated in Guild shows since. The five categories were political, natural, personal, patriotic, and traditional. The theme of the show was so strong as to override the usual categories based on technique. In particular, the inclusion of the category "political," shows perhaps some of the ambivalence which was beginning to be felt in Australia about the Bicentennial and its implications. Quilts entered in this category were more likely to contain references to the struggle of Aboriginal people, and the winner in this category, *Aerodrome* by Jan Irvine, had the Aboriginal flag as a crucial motif.[26]

The selection for the exhibition is interesting, in that it was carried out very consciously as a showcase of Australian quiltmaking for the historical record. There were many group projects and many specifically Bicentennial quilts, but there was also an attempt to include other kinds of quilts as representative of trends in Australian quiltmaking. Probably no other show has taken itself so seriously as a measure of the quality of Australian quiltmaking nor seen itself in such self-consciously historical terms.

One event connected with the exhibition drew quilters together even more than usual. That was the loss of seventeen quilts in a fire at a photographer's studio while waiting to be photographed for the book. The event made the newspapers around the country, especially the local papers of quiltmakers whose work had been destroyed. Sympathy, fabric, and offers of help to replace or remake the quilts poured into the Guild. Some of the quilts were replicated and some were replaced with others by the same quiltmaker for the show, but the burned quilts remained a ghostly presence at the show (and in the book, which includes pictures of burned fragments of quilts), a modern reminder of all the quilts destroyed over the past two hundred years.[27]

Conclusion

Since 1988, Australian quiltmaking has continued to grow in popularity, sophistication, and world recognition. Australian quiltmakers have begun to find their own distinctive imagery and style, yet continue to follow and learn from the best work being done in other countries, particularly, of course, from quiltmaking in North America. Current trends among quiltmakers in the United States, including those towards freer, less formal work, and the new interest in African-American and country utility quilts, have also been manifest in Australia. The importance of the 1988 Bicentennial to quiltmaking was in convincing Australian quiltmakers of the worth of their craft, of its ability to reflect their social, political, and local concerns, and of its popularity and saleability. Without that national stimulus and the media coverage and visibility it gave to quiltmaking, this may have been a far longer process. In the quilts made in that year, Australia has a fascinating record of the concerns, images, and narratives of Australian quiltmakers, in relation to their areas, their histories, and their conceptions of themselves and their country. What a resource that will be for the quilt historians of the future!

Acknowledgments

I'd like to acknowledge the generous support of the Crafts Council of Australia, and The Quilters' Guild Inc. of NSW which enabled me to attend the AQSG Seminar in Portland, Maine. I also received some travel assistance from the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

Notes and References

1. For examples of the kind of history writing which has remade Australians' understanding of the invasion and the Aboriginal resistance to it, see the work of Henry Reynolds, including *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1982), and *The Law of the Land* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1990).

2. Gillian Bonham, "Address to Opening of Quilt Australia 88," *The Template* 6, no.7 (August 1988): 8.
3. Margaret Rolfe, *Patchwork Quilts in Australia* (Richmond: Greenhouse Publications, 1987), and M. Rolfe, "Quilting: Its Absence in Australia," in *Uncoverings 1988*, ed. Laurel Horton (San Francisco CA: American Quilt Study Group, 1989), 87–104 .
4. Rolfe, *Patchwork Quilts*, 8–10.
5. For one brief reference in a large book, see Grace Cochrane, *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press,1992), 368–69.
6. See in particular, Rolfe, "Quilting."
7. Paddy Childs-Green, "Megan Terry," in *Down Under Quilts* 1, no.4 (December 1988): 21.
8. Glennda Marsh, "Sharing Something Special," in *Down Under Quilts* 4, no.1 (March 1991): 14.
9. Margaret Rolfe, Catalog Essay, *Quilt Australia 88 Catalogue*, (Sydney: Quilters' Guild Inc., 1988), 12.
10. Glennda Marsh, "Quilts in Women's Lives: The Australian Post War Revival," in *Down Under Quilts* 2, no.3 (September 1989):10–12.
11. Maryliss Green-Armytage, "A Decade of Quilting," in *CraftWest 5* (November 1986): 13.
12. Megan Terry, "The Australian Quilters' Association," in *Fibre Forum* 2, no.2 (1983): 35.
13. Adele Outteridge, "The Quilters' Guild Exhibition 1984," in *Craft NSW* 159 (December 1984): 7.
14. Maree Gebhardt, "Quilters' Guild of SA Successful Inaugural Exhibition," in *SA Crafts News* (September/October 1985): 7.
15. Suzanne Keating, "First National Australian Quilting Seminar," *Craft Victoria* 159 (September 1985): 8.
16. Aboriginal textile ventures, using non-traditional materials, have flourished in Australia since the 1970s, mainly in remote Central Australian, and Northern Territory communities. These include batik production, screen printing, and silk painting. For more details, see Cochrane, *Crafts Movement*, 326–31.
17. *Down Under Quilts* 1, no.4 (September 1988):10.
18. Cathie Nutt, "Editorial," *Down Under Quilts* 1, no.4 (December 1988): 2.
19. Cochrane, *Crafts Movement*, 327.
20. A good example of this is the quilt *And in the beginning*, made by the Peel Cottage Quilters of Tamworth, NSW, which shows a settler's hut and

cultivated fields. See Quilter's Guild Inc., *Quilt Australia,* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1988), 58, plate no. 37.

21. Pictured in *Down Under Quilts* 2, no.2 (June 1989): 35.
22. This quilt was widely reported in the local press, both during its construction and upon its presentation to the local council. See for example *Glebe and Western Weekly* (Sydney NSW), May 25 1988, and *Gladesville Weekly Times* (Sydney NSW), July 13 1988.
23. See story on the Kalgoorlie Bicentennial Banner, "A Jewel from the Goldfields," in *Down Under Quilts* 1, no.1 (March 1988): 16–17; and a letter from Schwabe in *Down Under Quilts* 5, no.3 (September 1992): 3.
24. *Down Under Quilts* 2, no.2 (June 1989): 35. This quilt was also reported in the Melbourne newspaper, *Sun News Pictorial,* (February 20 1989).
25. Dianne Finnegan, "President's Report," *The Template* 6, no.5 (April 1988): n.p.
26. *Quilt Australia,* 52, plate no. 31.
27. See "Postscript: the Fire" in *Quilt Australia,* 111–25, which incorporates amateur and work-in-progress photographs of the lost quilts, and professional photographs of the charred remnants.