

# House museums as sites of memory

A thesis submitted for the Applied Science Masters degree of the University of Canberra.

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## Form B

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## Abstract

### **Houses Museums as sites of Memory**

Houses and the objects within them stand as tangible symbols of human memory. Some memories are created unconsciously in day-to-day living; others are consciously attached to objects that are cherished as symbols of other places, relatives and friends. Memories may seem to be lost until they are rediscovered in moment of involuntary recall, triggered by an object, a smell or taste.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the memory experiences of visitors to a house museum; what they do with those experiences and how important they are to them.

Forty adult visitors to Calthorpes' House in the ACT were interviewed using the focused interview technique with a framework of questions that allowed for a conversational style and additional questions. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The results showed that all visitors reported experiencing memories during their visit to Calthorpes' House. Many people found those experiences enjoyable and wanted to share them with others.

These findings are important because they can inform the set-up, interpretation and publicity of house museums in ways which will attract new visitors and help to engage with visitors' interests when they visit house museums.

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## 1. Introduction and Research Questions

Working as a guide in a house museum, I began to wonder why the visitors were there and what they hoped to experience during their visit. I was fortunate to be working in a house where I could often hear visitors' conversations and I began to notice a common theme in their discussions. It was the sharing of memories between visitors: "We had one of those when I was I child", "That smell reminds me of grandma's house"; "Your auntie had one just like that." I wondered if it was just the house where I was working (a homestead dating from the 1850s) that had this effect on visitors, or if it was happening in other house museums as well. As I visited other house museums and spoke to people who worked in them, I discovered that visitors were doing the same thing across a wide range of house museums. I wanted to know more. This research project gave me a structure to ask the visitors about their memories rather than just listening to their conversations and speculating about them.

The questions I wanted to answer were:

What proportion of visitors to house museums experience personal memories triggered by their experience?

Which experiences or objects trigger memories?

What sort of memories do visitors experience?

How do visitors use their memories?

Can this personal engagement with a heritage site through memory be used to inform interpretation and in other managerial functions such as authentic housekeeping and targeted publicity?

From the anecdotal evidence I expected to find that many visitors experience personal memories triggered by their experiences in house museums, and that visitors enjoy their memories as an important part of their visit, using them to connect to their own pasts and as a way to share the experience with friends and family. To understand the processes of the creation of memory and recall, and how it is used I would need to learn about the psychology of memory and how it is used to construct and affirm identity

and facilitate social interaction. I also needed to review the research into visitor behaviour in museums. To confirm these theories I decided to conduct interviews with visitors about their experiences of memory in a house museum setting.

I hypothesised that certain objects and experiences in the house museum would be potent triggers for memory but I did not know if these would be the same for most visitors or would cover a wide variety of triggers based on individual experience.

The aim of the investigation is to provide conclusions that may be used by house museum managers and interpreters to inform their work with visitors. For example, if it were possible to identify specific memory triggers with broad interest to many visitors this could be used by interpreters to help develop visitors' connection to the museum and their understanding of the site.

The literature review showed that museum research into visitors and non-visitors has highlighted an international interest in family history. Most people connect to the past through their personal experience and the experience of their family. House museum interpretation is effective when it is based on connecting visitors to the house through their personal experience. The domestic experience is a shared one that allows visitors to immediately begin to understand the house museum that they are visiting. Although there are profound distinctions between memory and history, public historians are now working to bring these two ways of experiencing the past together in historic places.

The research study involved interviewing 40 adult visitors to Calthorpes' House. The sample included men and women, Australian and international visitors, people born between 1911 and 1980. The interviews were conducted on the front veranda of Calthorpes' House at the end of people's visit to the house. The interviews followed the focused interview technique using a framework of questions - a method that allowed for a conversational style and additional questions. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interviews included questions about the personal experience of memory at Calthorpes' House, what triggered those memories, whether those memories were discussed during the visit and if they were an enjoyable or important a part of the visit.

## House museums in Australia

House museums include a wide range of properties. They can exist as historic buildings with or without contents; they can primarily be a collection of objects exhibited in a domestic space; they can be surrounded by gardens or landscapes that provide context, or exist in non-contextual space. The building, its contents and its context may be independent parts of the whole, but each works together to provide an opportunity for visitors to interpret the past.

Peter Lovell defines a house museum as, “a museum that has been developed around a house and its contents, in which the house itself is an integral part of the display. The building may or may not be of intrinsic significance in its own right, but where not, derives significance from its contents, decoration, inhabitants or surroundings as a set period piece.”<sup>1</sup>

In her article published in 1994, Linda Young positively identified 199 house museums in Australia and estimated a total of about 230.<sup>2</sup> The Australian Museums and Galleries on Line website listed 189 house museums in August 2004, however this list only included two house museums in the ACT (Blundell’s Cottage and St John’s Schoolhouse Museum) and not Calthorpes’ House, Lanyon or Mugga Mugga. Considering these omissions it would appear to be likely that there are more than 200 house museums in Australia.<sup>3</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics Museums report for 1999-2000 financial year included 411 historic properties in its total, although it does not give figures for house museums as such.<sup>4</sup> The same report gives a total of 2049 museum establishments in Australia.

House museums are run and financed by a variety of bodies; from the government-run Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales and ACT Cultural Facilities Corporation properties, to those run by community organisations such as the National Trust, other museums, National Parks, local councils and privately.

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<sup>1</sup> Lovell, ‘Assessment procedures for buildings used as house museums’, *Museums Association of Australia Annual National Conference Proceedings*, 1983, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Young, ‘House Museums in Australia’ in *Public History Review*, vol. 13, 1994, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Museums and Galleries on Line [www.amol.org.au](http://www.amol.org.au)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 8560.0 Museums Australia [www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/](http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/)

House museums are found in all the States and Territories of Australia. NSW has the largest number followed by Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, ACT and NT. The majority of house museums are in places that were rural areas or country towns when the houses were built although they may now be surrounded by suburbs, and most were built prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Young lists sixteen intact houses and, of these, there are only four from the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Calthorpes' House, 1927, ACT; Carrick Hill, 1939, SA; Greenmount Homestead, 1915, Qld; and Home Hill, 1916, Tasmania.<sup>5</sup>

House Museums can be divided into four categories according to Young: those focused on 'ancestor veneration'; 'pioneer fetishism'; 'genteel fantasy' and academic historical discourse.<sup>6</sup> Charlotte Smith explored what she called the 'Great Man' and 'social history' aspect of ancestor worship in house museums in her PhD dissertation.<sup>7</sup>

Considering that house museums make up about twenty per cent of the total number of museums in Australia and are among the most popular ways for people to find out about the past, there has been little research to collect quantitative and qualitative information about their visitors.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Research Project**

Most people live out historical narratives in their everyday lives... People are thus sensitized to the past: via their own memories, those of friends and family, and also by their immediate surroundings.<sup>9</sup>

Visitors to house museums often find emotional and personal experiences through the rooms, objects, sounds, smells and kinetic experiences that they offer. They interpret these experiences through their own historical narratives that are based on memory: whether that memory is of a personal experience or the memory of something learned from a relative, a teacher, a book or another reported source. The "personal and

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<sup>5</sup> Young, 'House Museums in Australia', pp. 168, 174.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Charlotte, *The House Enshrined*. PhD thesis, University of Canberra, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Young, 'House Museums in Australia', p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> Johnstone, Christine, 'Your Granny Had One of Those! How visitors use museum collections' in J. Arnold et al. *History and Heritage: Consuming the Past in Contemporary Culture*, Shaftsbury, Donhead 1998, p. 69.

emotional resonance of the ordinary” offer visitors a chance to relate to the past in a meaningful way.<sup>10</sup>

Nick Merriman explains that many people’s approach to the past is:

based on their family, their home, and the area they live in or come from. Material culture, such as treasured possessions, sometimes has an important role to play in making this sense of the past tangible, but many rely purely on memory, imagination and conversation, in which history is passed on verbally.<sup>11</sup>

House museums offer powerful opportunities for people to contact their personal experience of the past by allowing access to objects and experiences that are no longer available elsewhere. While people may keep treasured items that help them to recall their past, many objects and experiences are lost as people move house or renovate, and as everyday products cease production. The complete domestic context of the intact house museum allows the opportunity to revisit the past through objects and experiences that have historical authenticity.

As Falk and Dierking consider in their study of how people learn from museums:

Tapping into people’s personal history, creating personal connections with the institution, and facilitating positive family experiences and interactions are all ways to build positive expectations and enhance motivations for visiting; they are also excellent ways to facilitate learning.<sup>12</sup>

The aim of my research was to discover if visitors’ experiences in house museum trigger memories; which experiences trigger memories; how visitors use those memories to create historical narratives and how those narratives are then used and shared.

The objective is to understand this process and so offer conclusions that may be used by managers and staff to make house museums more accessible and potent to visitors.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> Merriman, Nick, *Beyond the Glass Case*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1991, p.121.

<sup>12</sup> Falk, John, H. and Dierking, Lynn, D., *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*, Walnut Creek, CA, Almirra Press, 2000, p. 181.

Calthorpes' House was chosen as the venue for the research for a number of reasons. The house was built and furnished in 1927 and so its interpretative era is within living memory for some visitors unlike other house museums in the Canberra area (Lanyon, Mugga Mugga, Blundell's Cottage). Staff at Calthorpes' House reported many incidents where visitors described their memories while in the house. This also occurs at other house museums and it would be useful to compare the survey results with the experiences of visitors at other house museums. The ACT Cultural Facilities Corporation agreed to the research project being carried out at Calthorpes' House.

The people targeted for the research were adults visiting the house during weekends. While some research has been undertaken into school visitors to house museums there has been little work in the area of adult visitors.<sup>13</sup> As adults make up the majority of visitors to Calthorpes' House and other house museums it is timely to investigate their experiences and expectations. Lynda Kelly argues in her research into older Australians' museum experiences that as the population ages older visitors will have a greater impact on museum visitation and it will be useful for curators to have an understanding of the requirements and interests of older visitors.<sup>14</sup>

Weekend visitors were chosen because their visiting times are flexible. During the week there are regular guided tours and the interviews could only be conducted at the end of each tour, leaving long intervals between visitors. Over the weekend, visitors can come at any time during the opening hours and so there were more opportunities to interview visitors as they completed their visits.

The research project began with a literature review that included reading on the psychological understanding of how memory works; the relationship between history and memory; surveys of museum visitors; and house museum interpretation.

The research interviews were designed to collect quantitative and qualitative information about the visitors and their experiences.

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<sup>13</sup> DeSantis, Engaging with the past: Structuring historic house museum visits for young children. Masters thesis, University of Canberra, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly, L., Savage, G., Landman, P., Tonkin, S., *Energised, Engaged, Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*. A joint publication by Australian Museum and the National Museum of Australia, Sydney 2002, p. 11.

## 2. Literature Review

### **Memory and History**

Memory and history are intertwined through museums and heritage sites. The discipline of history is evident in the work of professional historians which informs the content of collections and directs the interpretation of sites, while memory manifests in the personal experience of the people who work at the museums and heritage sites, and the visitors who come to experience them. The differences between memory and history may create a conflict between alternative ways of working with the past, but the synthesis of the two can stimulate the development of a new dialogue that values both.

Memory and history are two ways to approach the past but their means can be very different. Memory is personal, often full of bias and errors, lasts only a lifetime and usually stays within its family of origin. History is public, attempts to free itself of bias and error, is transmitted across the centuries, and is national and international. David Lowenthal explains the differences and similarities:

As modes of access to the past, memory, history and relics exhibit important resemblances and differences. By its nature personal and hence largely unverifiable, memory extends back only to childhood, though we do accrete to our own recollections those told us by forebears. By contrast, history, whose shared data and conclusions must be open to public scrutiny, extends back to or beyond the earliest records of civilization. The death of each individual totally extinguishes countless memories, whereas history (at least in print) is potentially immortal. Yet all history depends on memory, and many recollections incorporate history. And they are alike distorted by selective perception, intervening circumstance, and hindsight.<sup>15</sup>

Significant tensions exist in the understanding of what constitutes memory and history. These include the relationship between the personal as opposed to the public understanding of the past; issues of reliability; the different agenda of the two approaches; and, the overlap between the personal and the social.

Memory pre-dates the discipline of history. It is the original and continuing human experience of the past. While most memories will never become history, all history begins in memory. Memory is the raw material of history and, unlike many others

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<sup>15</sup> Lowenthal, David, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, CUP, Cambridge, 1997, p. xxii.

in the discipline, oral historians consider that individual memory is a valid way to explore the past. As recently as the mid-nineteenth century written histories were based on oral accounts and memory, and since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century history turned again to personal memory as a way of uncovering otherwise unrecorded histories.<sup>16</sup> Before the discipline of history became focussed on written records, oral history (which is personal memory) was seen as a primary source. Memory is based on personal experience while history uses secondary sources, such as government records or newspaper accounts. This move away from memory towards written records opened a division between history and memory that has been difficult for historians to bridge.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the writers of history distanced themselves from memory, citing the problems of inaccuracy that arise from relying on fallible recall. However while memory is infamous for its bias, errors and self interest, these problems exist in history too. Historians have been prepared, and sometimes eager, to criticise one another for these flaws and the commentary that followed historian Manning Clark's death in 1991 demonstrates that they do not necessarily offer their criticisms on the hope of dialogue with the perpetrator.<sup>17</sup>

Personal and professional agenda make an important difference to the way history and memory use the material of the past. Academic, museum, and popular historians all have their own agenda that inform their work: they may be working for publication in a particular journal; to communicate with a specific audience; or to appeal to the popular imagination. However, in general, memory works for the individual in reaffirming the self, while history works for the state or society in reaffirming the group. If history is perceived to have failed in this role, the dominant group in society may find cause to criticise the role of history, as has happened during John Howard's time as Prime Minister of Australia, specifically in the criticism of the "black armband view of history".<sup>18</sup> While the historians are criticised for their interpretation, there is still an expectation that history's function is to reaffirm the dominant group.

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson, Paul, *Voice of the Past*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Cahill, Rowan, *Labour History*, 83, The History Cooperative, November 2002.

<sup>18</sup> McKenna, Mark, *Different Perspectives on Black Armband History*, Research Paper, Politics and Public Administration Group, 10 November 1997.

Memory is our personal past. Like Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we can carry our personal memories with us whether or not they agree with the official past.<sup>19</sup> The agenda of memory to affirm the individual may cause conflict with the agenda of history, resulting in the suppression of memories. Where the official history of government and the mass media work for the national identity this can conflict with and suppress local and group memories, as in the experiences of Aboriginal Australians and the history of Aboriginal-European contact.<sup>20</sup>

However, neither personal memory nor public history is easily suppressed. Each influences the other by transforming memories and reinterpreting history. Glassberg argues that,

Analyses of the politics of communication about history must not only explain how the nation-state appropriates and transforms vernacular memories into its official history, but also how national imagery acquires diverse meanings from the local contexts in which it is displayed.<sup>21</sup>

The meaning of the past is flexible and may be changed by the agenda of the person interpreting it, by context and by time.

The overlap between the agenda of history and memory can prove complex for historians, and memory becomes especially difficult when narrative moves beyond the personal into the communal or collective, an area that is seen as the prerogative of history. The personal memories of Second World War veterans that fail to echo the official line of the history of the national identity or the value or glory of conflict, provide an example that will fade as the veterans die.

Because of these differences in approach, concerns about bias and errors, different agenda, and the individual as opposed to the collective, it has been hard to integrate personal memory and public history. Memory is not an easy subject for historians to study. In his 1996 article Glassberg asked, "What do historians talk about when they talk about memory? The profusion of terms – collective memory, popular memory, public memory, countermemory – suggests that memory requires further definition as a field of

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<sup>19</sup> Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. First published Martin Secker and Warburg, 1949.

<sup>20</sup> Reynolds, Henry, *With the White People*, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Glassberg, 'Public History and the Study of Memory', p. 13.

study.” As a result, there are few public history projects that use the theories that have come from research into memory.<sup>22</sup>

Yet it is possible for history and memory to work together. A different approach can be seen in the work of oral historians. While they recognise that memory may be historically unreliable and tends to mythologise and simplify the narrative of the past to fit the requirements of the present, in context, this approach may be a strength of memory rather than a weakness.

Like myth, memory requires a radical simplification of its subject matter. All recollections are told from a standpoint in the present. In telling, they need to make sense of the past. That demands a selecting, ordering, and simplifying, a construction of coherent narrative whose logic works to draw the life story towards the fable.<sup>23</sup>

This individual approach to making sense of the past is part of memory’s self-affirming role. Personal memory is valuable in creating self-identity and people’s ability to shape their own histories. Memories become the narrative that people tell themselves about their own lives. They often share this narrative with others and it develops into a life history that can be used to explain and order the past from a personal viewpoint.

Memory brings human emotion to history: it creates another dimension to the story of the past. Samuel and Thompson describe the value of memory to oral history: “We reintroduce the emotionality, the fears and fantasies carried by the metaphors of memory, which historians have been so anxious to write out of their formal accounts.”<sup>24</sup>

It is the human response that is so appealing in personal memory when opposed to public history. Memory allows the individual a creative and imaginative experience of the past that permits the expression of ideas or emotions with a wide range of meanings. People experience memory as a way of validating and shaping their own stories and experiences. It is creative and flexible. It is about the daily experience of life. Most people’s sense of history is more to do with the everyday and personal experience than from history books.<sup>25</sup> This gives individual memory special importance in heritage visits

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<sup>22</sup> Glassberg, ‘Public History and the Study of Memory’, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel, Raphael and Thompson, Paul, eds., *The Myths we Live by*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 211.

and the experience of a personal sense of history is widely reported by the individuals interviewed for this research project.

As well as being a personal, self-affirming, and imaginative activity, personal memory can also transform the exterior world. Memory and imagination create personal narratives that can modify places for the people who live there by linking their narratives to the physical environment.<sup>26</sup> What may be an architecturally uninteresting suburban house to an outsider, is packed with associations and memories for the people who live there.

Structured historic sites like house museums can also perform a similar role. Lowenthal considers the power of these places is in the link to individual memory. "People flock to historic sites to share recall of the familiar, communal recollection enhancing personal reminiscence. What pleases the nostalgist is not just the relic but his own recognition of it."<sup>27</sup>

Historians need to recognise the importance of memory and place and the links between them.<sup>28</sup> Glassberg argues that the understanding of history and place are linked, and the reason that a place is valued is because of the memories and historical associations that are linked to it. He explains that in some ways the historical site replaced oral history and memory under modern capitalism, as people moved to find work and lost their local knowledge. However, the current explosion of interest in local and family history could now be due to disillusion with the nation-state and modernity.<sup>29</sup>

The rise in interest in the personal nature of history has been difficult for historians and the approach of non-historians to the past and how their pasts relate to their concerns about the present is an area that has had little study. However, there are moves to integrate history and memory through scholarship on the way people create meaning for themselves. Public historians like David Carment in his work in Australia's Northern Territory are working to bring these two sides of how we view the past into a dialogue that is imaginative and creative.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Glassberg, 'Public History and the Study of Memory' in *The Public Historian*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors. The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> Glassberg, 'Public History and the Study of Memory', pp. 17 and 21.

<sup>30</sup> Carment, David, *A Past Displayed*. NTU Press, Darwin, 2001.

An awareness of the importance of memory by historians helps to develop these connections and heritage managers and interpreters can learn from the process. Historian Greg Dening takes a self-reflective view of his own work, building a link between memory and history with implications for understanding how everyone uses the past as part of their daily lives:

Now I think that what I do here so self-consciously we all do unreflectively every day of our lives. In gossip, in nostalgic memories, in family anecdote, in toasts and speeches, in anniversary ceremonies, in *rites de passage*, in symbolic actions, we are always making history by crafted stories... We do it so often and so constantly that we can hardly see the art and science of our 'memory palaces' for the making of them.<sup>31</sup>

There has been a change in the approach to the study of memory. Scholarship on memory is now interested in understanding the relationships between the different versions of history rather than concentrating on the beliefs about the past held by a group or institution.

This integration of history and memory can be achieved in the public space where the past is discussed from different viewpoints rather than being presented as a completed narrative to a passive audience.

The task of the public historian may be more to create spaces for dialogue about history and for the collection of memories, and to insure that various voices are heard in those spaces, than to provide a finished interpretation of events translating the latest professional scholarship for a popular audience.<sup>32</sup>

The dialogue between history and memory enriches the public experience and validates a personal version of history as part of the discussion. "In presenting history to the public, they [historians] soon discover that the public is presenting history back to them as well."<sup>33</sup>

Establishing this conversation means that people will consciously consider their memories. This is an opportunity to develop projects that explore the meaning of

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<sup>31</sup> Dening, Greg, 'Ethnography on my mind' in Smith, Bernard (ed.), *Boundaries of the Past*. The History Institute, Victoria, 1990, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Glassberg, 'Public History and the Study of Memory', p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

remembering and how to make memories vital rather static by focussing on memories and their role in people's lives rather than on the presentation of history.

By the serious consideration of memory as a social reality rather than an annoying filter to the past, the opportunities presented by the dialogue between memory and history can benefit all those with an interest in the past. Griffiths encourages historians to work with memory and discover its value.

Memory and history sustain and shape one another more than either admits; there has been a continual dialogue between popular and learned traditions of historiography. It is a virtue of public history that it examines and builds on that process, making historical consciousness – which historians perversely take for granted – of vital concern. And it urges historians to explore, rather than to discipline, memory.<sup>34</sup>

This spirit of dialogue between history and memory provides an opportunity to explore the places where they meet. The house museum is an ideal venue to experience this dialogue as the visitor and interpreter explore the past in the domestic context. The house museum is rich in memory triggers that connect visitors to the past through personal experience. This is a venue where history is interfused with memory like the smell of wood smoke in the air of the rooms.

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<sup>34</sup> Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors. The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, p. 218.

## Visitor Surveys

There is very little published information specifically about house museum visitors; most published visitor surveys concentrate on museums.<sup>35</sup> It seems likely that visitors to house museums present sufficiently similar demographics to general heritage visitors that the trends discussed in the published research about the tastes and interests of museum visitors and the differences between frequent and rare visitors can be applied to house museum visitors as well.

Most surveys are quantitative rather than qualitative. They tell the researcher how many and what type of visitor, rather than why people visit or what they would like to see. However the qualitative surveys from the UK, Canada, the USA and Australia provide a picture of the reasons people visit or do not visit museums, and what they consider to be important about them.

The difference between visitors and non-visitors is a central and critical area of study. A UK survey found that non-visitors tend to be less educated, less affluent and/or elderly and have negative attitudes towards museums.<sup>36</sup> Most people have their own personal sense of the past but this is overlaid with a sense of non-personal history that is mainly enjoyed by the rich and educated. Personal memory, family and place are the common ground that the sense of identity rests on.<sup>37</sup> By developing an awareness of the importance of visitors' personal pasts, heritage managers and interpreters can devise ways to attract and interest visitors.

This may even be a way to attract people who do not usually visit museums as Merriman considers that the non-visitor often has a personal sense of the past that is not necessarily reflected in museums and heritage sites.

People excluded from conventional heritage presentations do have a strong sense of the past, but gain it in a different way. Their approach is often intangible, being based on the family, the home, and the locality. Material culture, such as treasured possessions, sometimes have an important role to play in making this sense of the

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<sup>35</sup> An interesting exception is Lisa de Santis's work on young children. De Santis, Lisa, *Engaging with the past: Structuring historic house museum visits for young children*. Masters thesis, University of Canberra, 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 5 and 129.

past tangible, but many rely purely on memory, imagination and conversation, in which history is passed on verbally.<sup>38</sup>

Understanding these differences, the question is how to make museums more interesting to the non- or infrequent visitor. It may be that a different approach is necessary to dismantle cultural barriers around museums where the personal past is often set in opposition to impersonal heritage. For example, the work of Age Exchange in London in its reminiscence exhibitions and theatre, or the local photo archives stored in the Comma software databases, or the reminiscence boxes loaned by the Open Museum in Glasgow, or, in Australia, the work of Macquarie University Museums and Collections Group in aged cultural care.<sup>39</sup>

The frequency of visits gives an indication of the success of museums in catering for their audiences. A Canadian survey found that a small group of people are frequent visitors while the rest visit infrequently or not at all.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in a UK survey, 42 per cent of people made no museum visits in the year, 40 per cent visited once or twice, 19 per cent visited three to ten times, and only two per cent visited 11 or more times a year.<sup>41</sup> These results suggest that a small percentage of people really enjoy museums and visit them often, many people enjoy the experience enough to visit several times a year but the museum may be able to do more to increase the number of visits these people make. However, a large number of people do not visit museums and major changes may need to be made to attract these people.

A clue to the way to attract people to museums may be found in the reasons people give for visiting. These vary according to the frequency of visits. Frequent visitors put "specific interest" at the top of their list (35 per cent), followed by "general interest" (13 per cent), "to take others" (11 per cent), "because nearby" (10 per cent). Regular visitors placed specific and general interest first and second (22 per cent and 20 per cent) but placed sightseeing third (16 per cent). Occasional visitors ranked general interest first

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>39</sup> Age Exchange [www.age-exchange.org.uk](http://www.age-exchange.org.uk), Comma [www.commanet.org](http://www.commanet.org), Open Museum [www.glasgowmuseums.com](http://www.glasgowmuseums.com), Simpson, Andrew, David Rhonda, Hill, Kirri, 'Aged Cultural Care', *Museums Australia Magazine*, November 2004, pp. 18-19.

<sup>40</sup> A "statistically representative sample of a national population's participation in, and attitudes to, museums has been conducted in Canada (Dixon, Courney and Bailey 1974)." Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47.

(23 per cent), specific interest second (18 per cent) and because nearby, third (15 per cent). Rare visitors placed for work/study first (22 per cent), specific interest second (18 per cent) and general interest third (14 per cent).<sup>42</sup> These results suggest that frequent and regular visitors are likely to be interested in special events and new exhibitions, and that they return to the museum because of a specific interest. Occasional visitors are more likely to be interested in general exhibitions, they will not have had as many opportunities to explore the core collection as more frequent visitors. Rare visitors are most likely to come when they believe the museum can help them with work or study. These different priorities provide an opportunity to shape and present collections and exhibitions in ways that will appeal to different groups. For example, a marketing campaign that emphasises how the museum's exhibitions can assist students in their studies could be appropriate to help encourage some rare visitors to come to the museum.

A survey of museum visitors in Australia, asked people why they visited. The most popular reason given by visitors was "to experience something new" (77 per cent); closely followed by "for entertainment" (71 per cent); "to learn" (71 per cent); and, "for the interest of children/family" (70 per cent).<sup>43</sup>

While the opportunity to experience something new is important for the visitor, memories also play an important role. Research into Australian museum visitors over 65, found that "part of the stimulation of the day out came from exposure to new sights and ideas or the refreshing of past memories."<sup>44</sup>

Lynda Kelly found that familiar objects and memories have an important place in the museum experience for visitors.

By and large, people in this research did not go to museums to have their world view challenged. Instead they went to museums to be reminded, to have their world view confirmed or gently extended. Many participants described happy encounters with familiar objects and stories.<sup>45</sup>

In an unpublished UK single museum survey, family entertainment, new experiences and memory all played a part in visitor requirements. "The visitor wants

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>43</sup> Motivation for Visiting Museums/Galleries, from Kelly, et. al., *Energised, Engaged, Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 45.

family entertainment ('a good place to bring the kids'), excitement ('I never knew that'), or verification of past experience ('your granny had one of those')."<sup>46</sup> A successful exhibition will combine these requirements to give the visitors a rich and varied experience.

Context is another important motivation for visitors. Research in the UK found that visiting a site alone or with a guide were two of the three most popular ways to find out about local history; the other way was to watch a television program about local history.<sup>47</sup> A US survey also found that site specific museums have special power. The researchers reported that people trusted museums and historic sites because visitors felt they had been taken back in time to when the objects had been used and to the places where history happened.<sup>48</sup> House museums have an opportunity to develop this important sense of context by presenting objects in an authentic domestic environment that allows visitors a site specific experience of the past.

Objects have an important role in helping people to experience the past first hand. Ordinary objects that people recognise from their own experience are the ones most likely to interest them.<sup>49</sup> House museums, especially those with domestic objects that are within the living memory of their visitors, have the advantage of a wealth of ordinary objects that are likely to interest people.

Objects are often important to visitors because of family links, especially for less frequent visitors. When asked why they found an old object attractive all, except the most frequent visitors, rated family links as the most important reason. Only frequent visitors rated an object's beauty (43 per cent) above family links (32 per cent).<sup>50</sup>

An object held by the family that used it has the greatest potency for memory and the ability to create a link with the past.

Unlike the objects in a museum which have no direct personal link to the individual and are kept beyond touch by glass cases, for these people, these particular objects resonate with personal significance and no doubt give a real

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<sup>46</sup> Johnstone, Christine, 'Your Granny Had One of Those! How visitors use museum collections' in J. Arnold et al *History and Heritage: Consuming the Past in Contemporary Culture*, p. 74.

<sup>47</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> Rosenzweig, Roy and Thelen, David, *The Presence of the Past*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, p. 105.

<sup>49</sup> Johnstone, 'Your Granny Had One of Those!', p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 125.

sense of communion with the person who used them, or with the individual's childhood.<sup>51</sup>

However, most of the actual objects used by families have been broken, given away, discarded or sold over time. Johnstone explains that when the original family object is no longer available, those objects displayed in museums can act as substitutes and provide a trigger to family memory.

Social history collections in museums can often provide substitutes for these important emotional triggers, when the visitor cannot access the original remembered objects. It may not be Granny's, but Granny had one just like that.<sup>52</sup>

Merriman cites other writers who link objects to an imaginative experience of the past that has been lacking in many approaches. He concludes that the imagination allows for a meaningful personal experience of the past in the individual's own terms.<sup>53</sup>

More than half the Australians surveyed also said that objects were important either to be collected to be passed on to someone else or as a trigger for memory.<sup>54</sup> House museums often hold a great number of everyday domestic objects with great potency to trigger personal memories for visitors. Because it is most like the remembered object, the authentic well-used domestic object has much greater power to trigger memories for visitors than pristine originals or replicas.

Merriman's studies showed that his UK respondents rated the importance of different types of history according to their status. He asked people to rank different types of history. High status people put family history at the bottom of the list and British history at top; middle status people put family history second after British history; and low status people put family history at top and British history second. When he ranked the different types of history by the frequency of the visitor he found that frequent visitors ranked world history first and family history last. Occasional, rare and non-visitors all ranked family first.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>52</sup> Johnstone, 'Your Granny Had One of Those! How visitors use museum collections', p. 73.

<sup>53</sup> Fritz and Pallottino in Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 122.

<sup>54</sup> Hamilton and Ashton, 'Australians and the Past', p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 128.

However in Rosenzweig and Thelen's US study "Every subgroup of the population - men and women; young and old; rich and poor; white, black and Indian - listed family history first."<sup>56</sup> In Australia, Hamilton and Ashton found that Australian and family history ranked a close first and second (58.17 per cent and 55.87 per cent respectively) as the most important kinds of history that people talk about.<sup>57</sup> These studies surveyed whole populations rather than segregating visitors and non-visitors which may explain the differences in results.

Visitors and non-visitors place a high value on family history and memory. People are interested in the things that they can connect with on a personal level. Johnstone writes that, "People are thus sensitised to the past: via their own memories, those of their friends and family, and also by their immediate surroundings." Past experience determines what, at least some, visitors say that would like to see in museums. For example, research from Wakefield Museum in the UK found that older people were most interested in seeing exhibits of things that they remember from their own experience.<sup>58</sup>

This personal connection with the past can extend beyond the lifetime of the visitor into their family history and the connections they feel to older buildings and landscapes that they are familiar with, especially countries with a long built history. So, while a 70-year-old can remember back to their own childhood, they may also know family stories that date back another 150 years, as well as being familiar with buildings and landscapes that date back 200 or 250 years.<sup>59</sup> While visitors to house museums remember events and places from their own childhood, they may also recall stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents as part of their family history narrative, so a house museum like Lanyon from the 1850s may still provide memory triggers for visitors today.

Family history is important to visitors and a US study found that men and women said that they felt most connected with the past when they were with their families. Younger people also said that they connect to the past through family and memory. This

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<sup>56</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Hamilton, Paula and Ashton, Paul, 'Australians and the Past', pp. 22-23.

<sup>58</sup> Johnstone, 'Your Granny Had One of Those! How visitors use museum collections', pp. 69 and 72.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

family-orientated past is also evoked at museums and historic sites where a family link can be made.

Visits to historic sites and museums sparked an associative process of recalling and reminiscing about the past that connected them to their own history. Their visits – far from a passive viewing of a version of the past arranged by a museum professional – became a joint venture of constructing their own histories either mentally or in conversation with their friends and kin.<sup>60</sup>

Similar results in Australia show that, “the family is the principal site for exploration and teaching about the past.”<sup>61</sup> US research found that the social aspect of a visit and the sharing of a collective past with family members is also powerful with more than half those asked saying that activities they did with their families such as visiting museums and historic sites, and celebrating holidays made them feel strongly connected to the past.<sup>62</sup>

Australians also said that they felt most connected to the past at family gatherings.<sup>63</sup> Like these Australian and US surveys, UK visitors have a similar social enjoyment of sharing the past with family. In a UK survey 59 per cent of visitors came with members of their family.<sup>64</sup> Family visits to museums and historic sites are a popular way to a share family history in a location that provides triggers for family memories. People actively look for museums and historic sites where they can find links to their lives. From the familiar, they can then move into different stories of the past, engaging with other kinds of history from a strong base.

In Merriman’s final chapter on how to use the material from his survey he writes, “We need to enable all people, in all their complexity, to participate in museums, and we need to return people as sentient individuals into our analysis of heritage because, in the words of one of the survey respondents, ‘After all, it is people that create history’.”<sup>65</sup>

The international research into museum visitors describes the trends of interest into personal and family history in developed, English-speaking countries. Visitors enjoy seeing objects and places with a link to their own or their family’s past. They like to share

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<sup>60</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, pp. 20, 31, 32.

<sup>61</sup> Hamilton, Paula and Ashton, Paul, ‘Australians and the Past’, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> Hamilton, Paula and Ashton, Paul, ‘Australians and the Past’, pp. 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

these experiences with the people they visit with. Non- and infrequent visitors are also interested in the past as it relates to their family experience and there is an opportunity to reach these people by developing exhibitions and programs that make these connections.

House museums are in a good position to develop these interests. The authentic domestic environment with its many objects provides a context that can connect people to their family's past. The social interaction within family groups increases the pleasure of visits to house museums through shared memories. These experiences are a significant part of the reason why visitors enjoy house museums and return to them. They may also provide a way to attract people who are looking for a personal or family connection in heritage visiting that they cannot find elsewhere.

### **House museums and interpretation**

House museums are like other museums in many ways but their differences pose challenges for interpretation. In general, "heritage interpretation is the communication of the ideas about nature and history which make certain material places and 'things' culturally significant."<sup>66</sup>

Young argues that, like other heritage interpretation, house museums are part of a shared heritage and are interpreted for the same reasons.

In the broadest sense, however, the reason for interpreting heritage things and places is to contribute to the communal sense that, as a society, we share a material heritage which is part of our cultural identity, and that such shared heritage is valuable.<sup>67</sup>

The way house museums are interpreted needs to be meaningful to the visitors, just as for other heritage sites. Jessica Foy Donnelly notes that the opportunity provided by house museums is to interpret the story of the house and its inhabitants in context.

A primary goal of historic house interpretation, then, should be creating experiences and telling stories within the context of the lives represented by the house and its collection and about things that mean something to visitors – things that they care about and that bear some relation to their own lives.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Young, Linda, 'Interpretation: Heritage Revealed' in *Historic Environment* Vol. 11, No. 4, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Foy Donnelly, Jessica, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 2002, p. 9.

Personal connection is a powerful tool for interpretation because people pay attention to personal information. Using self-referencing techniques helps people to link new ideas to something they already know and care about.<sup>69</sup> Falk and Dierking's work with museum visitors confirms this. They observe that, "As people interact, they also talk about what they know from previous experiences, discussing what they see, hear, and read in terms of these experiences and memories."<sup>70</sup>

The life experiences of visitors to house museums means that they can begin to construct their own understanding of how people lived by interpreting what they see in the context of what they already know. Starting from their own life experiences, visitors have knowledge that they can build on to understand the interpretation of the house.

The great advantage house museums have over other heritage sites is that they immediately provide a meaningful context for the visitor. The first hurdle of interpretation is already overcome when the visitor arrives. The visitor is already familiar with the domestic environment even if it is different in detail to what they have experienced in their own life.<sup>71</sup>

Calthorpes' House has the advantage of rooms and objects that are within the living memory of some of its visitors. Young observes that the familiar, seen in context, allows visitors to immediately bring their own experience to the visit.

In the case of Calthorpes' House, continuing to maintain the existing household arrangements is a means of interpreting its significance as evidence of a way of life now gone. Visitors are often unnerved by the apparent ordinariness of the slightly worn upholstery and the somewhat battered kitchen implements. 'We had one like that', they say with a mixture of recognition and surprise. In this case, the significance of the place and its contents is that – familiar as these things were to some people – they rarely survive today and are beyond the experience of several new generations.<sup>72</sup>

However only some house museums make use of the common domestic context for interpretation. The "Great Man" house museum focuses on a single well-known individual to the expense of the other inhabitants and activities that are connected with

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<sup>69</sup> Ham, Sam, H., *Environmental Interpretation*, North American Press, Golden, Colorado, 1992, pp. 15-16.

<sup>70</sup> Falk, John, H., and Dierking, Lynn., D. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*, Walnut Creek, CA, Almirra Press, 2000, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Young, 'Interpretation: Heritage Revealed', p. 6.

the house. Foy Donnelly warns that “house museums that disproportionately interpret the heads of their historical households do so at the expense of the other people, activities, and relationships that also distinguish their sites’ history.”<sup>73</sup>

Visitors may also be offered stylistic, architectural or object-based interpretation which is often technical for the lay person.

One view expressed by a senior curator was that what is most significant about Susannah Place is that the building fabric has survived from 1844, not that it has one of the richest collections of 20<sup>th</sup> century working class people’s memories and the physical context for these memories.<sup>74</sup>

While this kind of interpretations may be valid for certain topics it is not the most effective way to enthuse the general visitor or provide a link to their life experience. Sally Benson warns that the “determinedly instructive air” of house museum interpretation may “lose the sense of life and warmth” of the human use of the house.<sup>75</sup>

An alternative is to focus instead on the domestic interpretation: on how things were done and who did them. Calthorpes’ House presents an excellent opportunity for this kind of interpretation. Marilyn Lake comments on how “the interpreters of Calthorpes’ House in Canberra drew explicitly on women’s history in drawing attention to gender and work relations in the house.”<sup>76</sup>

Successful house museum interpretation draws on a complex, multi-sensory environment that allows visitors to fully experience the house. Nancy E. Villa Bryk provides example from a house museum in the USA:

Visitors enter the boyhood home of Harvey Firestone in Greenfield Village, smell the coal stove working, watch food preparation, walk into the sitting room (furnished so that our guests can roam and touch everything), stand before the dining room set for supper, peer into the formal parlor, and truly feel as if they are transported to another time and place.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Foy Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Walker quoted in Smith, ‘The House Enshrined. Great Man and Social History Huse Museums in the United States and Australia’, pp. 198-9.

<sup>75</sup> Benson, Sally, ‘Spirit of ’76’, *New Yorker*, 25 Dec. 1954 p. 24, quoted in Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 356.

<sup>76</sup> Lake, Marilyn, ‘Historical Homes’ in Rickard, John and Spearitt, Peter (eds), *Packaging the Past. Public Histories*, p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> Villa Bryk, Nancy, ‘“I wish you could take a peek at us at the present moment”: Infusing the historic house with characters and activity’ in Foy Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, p. 150.

The more senses that are stimulated, the richer the visitor's experience. Successful interpretation goes beyond the visual to provide stimulation as sound, smell, taste and touch. Handling objects helps the kinaesthetic learner, and hands-on activities can also add other sensory stimuli, including sound and smell, to the visitor's experience.

These experiences allow the visitor to engage with the house and build on personal experience to learn about its cultural significance. House museums present a wonderful opportunity for visitors to experience and learn about domestic life within a multi-sensory context. Villa Bryk observes that house museums provide good opportunities for visitors to learn when the interpretation takes advantage of the context and multi-sensory environment.

Historic houses are naturally evocative and may be among the most effective settings for learning within a museum. The houses are fully 'immersive' – visitors are drawn into realistic, richly detailed environments that may include period music or dialogue, have wonderful smells emanating from kitchen or hearth, and be interpreted by a costumed staff member.<sup>78</sup>

While it is not necessary for all house museums to adopt the costumed guide, the opportunity to offer visitors this kind of multi-sensory environment is especially pertinent to house museums. Unlike many other museums and historic sites, house museums often have the capacity to easily offer visitors smells, sounds, taste and touch in context as part of their visit. While exhibits at museums and historic sites may also provide some multi-sensory experiences these may be artificially produced (smells at Jorvik, York, UK), or provided as a recorded sound track (aircraft noises at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia) rather than actual smell of wood smoke or the sound of a pianola being played at Calthorpes' House.

This advantage means that house museums have the opportunity to engage visitors on a personal and sensory level that provides a powerful connection to the interpretation of the house and makes the experience more enjoyable and interesting for visitors.

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p. 146.

### 3. Memory

#### **Psychological Definitions**

The idea of memory straddles the arts and sciences: it's a pattern of electrical activity in the brain but also the mother of the ancient Greek muses, Mnemosyne. Memory gives humans identity and an understanding of the past. Memories can be made and lost, they can bring joy or sorrow and, in many ways, both to art and science, they're still a mystery.

From a neurophysiological point of view, Steven Rose writes that learning, and hence memory, is an electrical change in the cells of the central nervous system. Neurophysiologist, Walter Freeman and philosopher, Christine Skarda studied the electrophysiological properties of a rabbit's olfactory cortex and they "argue that memories are represented in terms of fluctuating dynamic patterns of electrical activity across the entire brain region, fluctuations from which the application of chaos theory can extract pattern and order."<sup>79</sup>

But whether this impulse is different for different types of memory is yet to be discovered. Psychologists have studied and named many different types of memory. Short and long-term memory are familiar concepts. Short-term memories are those that are immediate and these memories may or may not be converted into long-term memories and stored for later recall.<sup>80</sup> Long-term memories, or what pioneer psychologist William James called secondary memories, are the memories that have been stored. "Short-term was *primary* memory, that which is currently being attended to," he contrasted this with *secondary* memory, the "knowledge of a former state of mind after it has already dropped from consciousness".<sup>81</sup> Among these long-term or secondary memories are what are termed autobiographical memories: memories that people have about their own lives. Autobiographical memories can be declarative, that is, factual: I remember we lived at 121 Elgar Avenue when I was a child, or experiential, with images.

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<sup>79</sup> Rose, Stephen, *The Making of Memory*, Bantam Books, London, 1993, pp. 313, 318.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 114, 314.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

and emotions: I liked living there, it was a happy house.<sup>82</sup> Visitors to house museums often experience these declarative and experiential types of autobiographical memories.

The differences between childhood and adult memories are also important. Photographic memory is the common name for the technical term *eidetic*, from the Greek for image. Rose writes that eidetic memory “is so different from the ways in which most adults seem to remember things; by its very difference it opens questions about what is for most of us normal memory that we would not otherwise think of asking.” Research has shown that many children experience eidetic memory while most adults experience linear memory. Linear memory is time-based: most adults seem to process their memories in a sequence that transforms and stores them.<sup>83</sup>

These differences are important because people, specifically in this case visitors to house museums, are not able to access childhood memories in the same way that they can access adult memories. While it is often possible to voluntarily access an adult memory by thinking about a particular topic it may not be possible to access a childhood memory in the same way. However, involuntary memories may be experienced as the result of exposure to a trigger that stimulates an otherwise forgotten experience. These involuntary memories may be eidetic and take the person back to a vivid moment of their past.

There is also a distinction between doing and naming memories: psychologists call the memory of how to do something *procedural*, *skill* or *habit* memory. The memory that something is, is called *declarative* memory. Declarative memory is subdivided into *episodic* and *semantic* memory by Canadian psychologist, Endel Tulving. He described the memory of a personal life history as episodic, and memories that are independent of life history as semantic.<sup>84</sup> Visitors to house museums often experience episodic memories, recalling incidents in their own lives while the interpretation they are offered is usually semantic, about events and people who, until their visit, are outside their personal life history.

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<sup>82</sup> Cohen, G., Kiss, G., Le Voi, M., *Open Guides to Psychology. Memory. Current Issues*, Buckingham UK, Open University Press, 1993. p. 52.

<sup>83</sup> Rose, *The Making of Memory*, pp. 102, 103, 106, 119.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120.

Recall is a problematic area for those studying the way memory works. Studies on the triggers for memory show that they can be any of the things that were involved in the original experience: taste, smell, shape, colour, and so on. Latent memories may exist in the brain just waiting for the right trigger to bring them back. Tulving argues that memory only exists when it is recalled, likening it to “a magnetic trace on a cassette tape... In the limited sense that the music on the tape exists only when the cassette is subsequently played, the engram only exists when it is ‘ecphorized’ – and the memory is retrieved.”<sup>85</sup> The authentic triggers to memory in house museums can be very powerful for visitors because these memory triggers may not be available elsewhere. This is why some visitors experience memories in house museums that are unlikely to be triggered in other contexts.

Memory is important for everyone, it is central to our sense of personal history and identity. “Memories are our most enduring characteristic. In old age we can remember our childhood eighty or more years ago; a chance remark can conjure up a face, a name, a vision of sea or mountains once seen and apparently long forgotten.”

“Lose your memory and you, as *you*, cease to exist.”<sup>86</sup>

This thesis focuses on long-term or secondary memories that are autobiographical and so episodic. These memories may be declarative or experiential, eidetic or linear. In other words, this research project is concerned with asking people about their memories of their own lives including factual memories and memories of experience, whether those memories are from childhood or adult life.

## **How memories are created**

By understanding how memories are created it is possible to develop an insight into how memories will be recalled. Knowledge of the sort of memories that visitors to house museums are likely to have will assist in staff awareness of what visitors can be expected to remember.

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 316, 319.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

From a neurobiological viewpoint, memories are created by changes in the brain.<sup>87</sup> But it appears that not every event creates a strong memory. Why do we seem to remember some things and forget others? Why do some memories endure so they can be recalled voluntarily while others need a trigger to bring them back?

Based on the work of nineteenth century psychologist, Hermann Ebbinghaus, many psychologists see short- and long-term memory as a series of processes. What we experience goes in to a short-term “store” where it is filtered and most of it is lost, the rest goes into a long-term store where it seems to be held permanently.<sup>88</sup>

Whether a memory survives or not seems to be linked to the circumstances in which it was formed. The moments after the event will decide whether the memory is saved or discarded. Novelty is also more likely to create memories. Changes in activities means we are more likely to remember: new experiences create memories.<sup>89</sup> If emotions and physical sensations are linked to memories, the memory is more likely to survive, especially if the experience is still important in later life.<sup>90</sup>

Repetition creates another sort of memory. For example, Marigold Linton studied her own memory over six years and found that regular committee meetings formed a schema that was applied to all the meetings. Schema theory describes how memory is organised as a series of representations that include everything the person knows about an object or event that they have learned from their experience.<sup>91</sup>

Repeated events, a weekly wash day, for example, gradually create a general schematic knowledge with elements and patterns that recur. These repetitions are merged into a general schema about the repeated event. Repeated events are likely to lay down a general schema that will be remembered rather than a series of individual memories about similar events. Visitors to house museums often have schematic memories of repeated domestic tasks like cooking and washing.

Once the memory is created it is more likely to be retained with some form of reinforcement. Thinking or talking about remembered events or objects, people

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<sup>87</sup> Schacter, Daniel L., *The Seven Sins of Memory: How The Mind Forgets and Remembers*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 2001, p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> Rose, *The Making of Memory*, p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>90</sup> Cohen, et. al., *Open Guides to Psychology. Memory. Current Issues*, p. 54.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53 and 27.

understand their experience better and are most likely to remember something that they have recalled.<sup>92</sup> Visitors to house museums often reinforce memories by discussing them with the group that they are visiting with.

As memories become fainter they need more triggers to recall them. Even things that we think we have forgotten may be remembered by cues that help us to recall how we would have coded the original event. Some things need powerful reminders to help us recall. Psychologist Willem Wagenaar made a diary study of his personal memories that showed what he forgot and what he remembered. He found that he would gradually and partially forget things so that he was left with fragmentary memories.<sup>93</sup> House museums may help visitors to link fragmentary memories by providing memory triggers that return visitors to the original event and assist their recall of missing memories.

Some psychologists argue that nothing is forgotten. Lionel Standing's experiments with the recognition of photographs, showed subjects who were able to recognise up to 10,000 individual photos. He argued that there was no upper limit to the capacity of memory and from this it is also possible to argue that nothing is forgotten if we know how to stimulate the recall.<sup>94</sup>

Strong memories are created by repeated experiences (the daily walk to school) or by novel experiences (the first time I broke my arm) or by heightened emotions (when I felt sad because my dog died). While some may argue that we can potentially remember everything, it is likely that we will remember the strong memories first.

Visitors to house museums may expect to experience some memories as a result of their visit because of their knowledge of the place they are visiting (period of buildings, life style of inhabitants) but other memories will be unexpected, triggered by experiences that are particular to the site. These involuntary memories cannot be foreseen and often provide visitors with vivid experiences of their own pasts.

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<sup>92</sup> Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory*, p. 31.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>94</sup> Rose, *The Making of Memory*, p. 117.

## Remembering

Memory is a collection of processes rather than a single universal process. Each person remembers different things in different ways: linear, photographic, schematic or involuntary memories. Understanding that there are different ways of remembering provides an insight into the different memory experiences of visitors to house museums.

Photographic or eidetic memory is common in young children but unusual in adults. However, many people recall their early memories as a “series of snapshots, fixed or frozen in time.” When we are young we don’t know which things are important, we haven’t learned to filter out the usual from the unusual so we notice and remember a great deal more than we would as adults. Children gradually develop their own criteria of what is or is not significant and so what they should remember.<sup>95</sup>

Adult memory is different: filters and schemas are in place and there is no need to remember everything. The change between child and adult memory styles happens before puberty and as a result, looking back as an adult, childhood memories seem different to adult ones. However that eidetic childhood experience is not completely lost, and adults are left with eidetic fragments of their childhood memories.<sup>96</sup> Visitors to house museums often experience childhood memories and some of these are eidetic fragments that provide visitors with vivid experiences of their own lives that they may have forgotten.

Studies of extraordinary memories give some clues about the way memory works. Some people link words to images in their memories either deliberately to aid memory or unconsciously. Another memory technique is to mentally place objects to be remembered in specific landscape so that spots in a familiar place will be linked in memory to a specific thing.<sup>97</sup> There is a powerful link between visual images and memory triggers that may be used consciously or unconsciously to aid recall. Other senses may also be linked to the process of remembering. For example, synaesthesia is when one physical sense produces an effect on another, multiplying the sensory input. This combination of sensory experiences shows how the senses are linked together and how, for example, a smell can trigger a visual memory.

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 102, 103, 105.

<sup>96</sup> Rose, *The Making of Memory*, pp. 104, 106.

<sup>97</sup> Luria, A. R., *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, Harvard University Press, USA, 1987 edition, pp. 30-32.

These insights give some clues about how memories are processed and how they can be triggered by sensory experiences that are stored as part of the original memory. These triggers may come from any of the senses: sight, sound, taste, smell or touch, or a combination. People remember things in different ways and even after sharing the same experience people may need different triggers to recall the same event. Literature gives an insight into the workings of the memories of writers in their process of recall.

Voluntary memories are those we choose to recall, while involuntary memories come unbidden as the result of a trigger. Literature provides examples of the triggering of involuntary memories, famously in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*:

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea.<sup>98</sup>

Esther Salaman made a collection of these involuntary memories, finding rich material in writers' autobiographies and recording the excitement of experiencing the return of a memory. "There is another kind of memory of experience, which comes unexpectedly, suddenly, and brings back a past moment accompanied by strong emotions, so that a 'then' becomes a 'now' " notes Salaman.<sup>99</sup>

Involuntary memories can return at any time but it seems that more return later in life. "The memories which came back involuntarily in maturity (I was in my early fifties), when I was writing about childhood, adolescence and youth, added many new memories of moments to my old conscious memories."<sup>100</sup>

While most people experience involuntary memories these are usually partial. Their memories of childhood may contain eidetic fragments and schemata of often-repeated events. Their adult memories may be consciously structured but interspersed with flashes of involuntary memories that are triggered by sensory or emotional experiences.

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<sup>98</sup> Proust, M., *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)*, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, p. 61.

<sup>99</sup> Salaman, Esther, *A Collection of Moments, A study of Involuntary Memories*, Longman, London, 1970. p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

The memories that visitors to house museums may be triggered by any of the senses, they may be voluntary memories that could be accessed at any time, or they may be involuntary memories that are triggered in response to a specific stimulus in the house museum.

### **What stimulates recall?**

The context of the house museum is extremely important in the stimulation of recall. Visitors often find similarities between houses they have known in their past experience and the fabric and contents of house museums. These similarities may occur in any of the sensory experiences. When these experiences are placed in familiar domestic context they are more likely to stimulate recall.

A study by Alan Baddeley explored learning and remembering in context. Baddeley taught two groups of people a long list of words: one group learned the words while lying on the beach; while the other group learned underwater wearing scuba gear. He then tested both groups in both locations. “He reported that those who learned on the beach remembered better on the beach. And remarkably, those who learned underwater, encased in rubber with breathing apparatus on their backs, performed better that way too...getting back to the original state of mind also aids memory. The same background music, sounds and smells help.”<sup>101</sup>

Psychologists have made attempts to improve eye witness’ recall using a technique called the *Cognitive Interview* which is designed to “maximize the number of possible retrieval routes. The idea is that reactivating the context will cue the memory of the original event.”

Retrieval of items from episodic memory depends heavily on recreating the context in which the items were originally embedded. General knowledge schemas relating to activities and places... provide the framework for these contexts.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Motluk, Alison, ‘Forget it’, *New Scientist*, No 2313, Reed Business Information, 20 October 2001, p. 35.

<sup>102</sup> Cohen, et. al., *Open Guides to Psychology. Memory. Current Issues*, pp. 39 and 58. Cognitive Interview technique, Geiselman, 1985.

Part of the context of an event is the sensory and emotional experiences that accompany it. Memories can be triggered by any of the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and by kinetic experiences. As well as the reports of personal experience there are examples of the stimulation of memory by artificial means. Neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield performed an experiment by artificially stimulating his subjects' brains. He found that stimulating different regions created different effects which included "voices, music, people and scenes, as well as thoughts, memories of past experiences and visual flashbacks."<sup>103</sup> The claims that hidden memories were being stimulated aroused the interest of the researchers.

Sound and vision are often linked together in memory. From her work in reminiscence, Faith Gibson reports that memory for sounds may be vivid and often the remembered sound is linked to a visual memory.<sup>104</sup> Visitors to Calthorpes' House reported that seeing and hearing someone play the pianola brought back memories of family get togethers around similar instruments. Taste and smell are also linked together as memory triggers. Literature provides an example: "Memory can restore to life everything except smells, although nothing revives the past so completely as a smell that was once associated with it."<sup>105</sup> Science confirms the power of smell. "Forced reminiscence...in response to the powerful mnemonic stimulus of certain words, sounds, scenes and especially smells."<sup>106</sup> The smell of wood smoke at Calthorpes' House is a powerful memory trigger for some visitors, stimulating recall of houses they experienced in their childhood.

Reminiscence work confirms the power of taste and smell as well as the importance of touch: "Instant pleasure and immediate recall are triggered from handling objects."<sup>107</sup> These objects may be triggers to a memory of a particular task or activity or they may have an emotional value. Recall may be linked to the emotions of the time of

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<sup>103</sup> Rose, *The Making of Memory*, p. 130.

<sup>104</sup> Gibson, Faith, *Reminiscence and Recall*, A Guide to Good Practice, ACE Books, London, 1994, p. 57.

<sup>105</sup> Nabokov, V. M., *Mary*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1970.

<sup>106</sup> Sacks, Oliver, *The man who mistook his wife for a hat*, Picador, London, 1985, p. 144. Sacks' work with patients using L-Dopa describes the resulting forced or involuntary memories.

<sup>107</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, p. 58.

the event that are still significant later.<sup>108</sup> Cherished objects may improve the mood of the person remembering as they revisit happy memories.

‘Memorabilia’ refers to things or objects that stir recollection. Research suggests that people who have no cherished objects experience a much lower mood and reduced life satisfaction compared with others in similar circumstances who have access to cherished objects.

Cherished possessions are thought to provide a sense of historical continuity, comfort and a sense of belonging.<sup>109</sup>

Memories can create a cascade effect where a conscious or voluntary memory leads to an involuntary one and then another. Salaman writes, “Again and again, as I dwelt on a conscious memory, another moment of the same experience would come back involuntarily.” These in turn build on the conscious memory, adding new material to voluntary memories.<sup>110</sup>

With age come more experiences, associations and memories to draw on; the connections grow and the possible triggers multiply. Each remembered experience develops a variety of links and associations with a range of triggers from different senses and related memories.<sup>111</sup>

Recall is stimulated by context, the senses and emotions. Returning to a place where something happened is likely to trigger the memory of that event. Seeing, hearing, smelling, touching or tasting are all possible memory triggers. Significant objects, either originals or ones like them, can trigger memories. Emotions and kinetic experiences may also trigger memories. The more connections there are between a place, the senses, objects, emotions and memories the more likely it is that memories will be triggered.

House museums provide a host of these memory triggers for visitors with an abundance of contextual, sensory, kinetic and emotional experiences that can connect the visitor to their personal history. The house museum becomes an emblematic domestic past for visitors from a range of backgrounds and personal experiences. The richness of

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<sup>108</sup> Cohen, et. al., *Open Guides to Psychology. Memory. Current Issues*, p. 54.

<sup>109</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, p. 113.

<sup>110</sup> Salaman, *A Collection of Moments*, pp. 24, 28.

<sup>111</sup> Kavanagh, Gaynor, *Dream Spaces, Memory and the Museum*, Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 104.

the authentic domestic context allows the house museum to represent a myriad of personal histories while simultaneously retaining its specific history.

## Reminiscence

“Reminiscence is the act or process of recalling the past.”<sup>112</sup> Reminiscence is now seen as a positive activity with many benefits. However in the early 1960s, reminiscence was seen as a sign of illness by many psychiatrists and psychologists.<sup>113</sup> At that time professional carers of the elderly discouraged reminiscence. They believed that reminiscence and “living in the past” was a negative sign of aging and they discouraged it.

However, by the early 1980s attitudes were changing towards encouraging reminiscence. Help the Aged developed and distributed a tape/slide package called “Recall”, which gained wide acceptance, and now reminiscence is seen as a valuable activity that can be used for therapeutic, social and recreational purposes.<sup>114</sup>

While most work on reminiscence has been done with older people, reminiscence has value for everyone, even young children. “Autobiographical memory emerges somewhere around 3 \_ years of age...it is during this period of early childhood that adults typically begin to talk with children about their memories.”<sup>115</sup>

One of the main benefits of reminiscence is the reconfirmation of self. The sense of one’s importance as an individual is enhanced by reminiscence, especially in modern Western society. Autobiographical memory helps to delineate individuality because people can define themselves by their personal history.<sup>116</sup> Reminiscence empowers the individual to make and tell their own history. “ ‘Each of us must have a created version of the past,’ writes Patricia Rampl; ‘refuse to write your life and you have no life.’ Life

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<sup>112</sup> Bulter in Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, p. 14.

<sup>113</sup> Haight, Barbara K. and Webster, Jeffrey D. (eds), *The Art and Science of Reminiscing. Theory, Research, Methods, and Applications*, Taylor and Francis, Washington DC, USA, 1995, p. xviii.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> Nelson, ‘Self and social functions: individual autobiographical memory and collective narrative’, *Memory*, Vol 11, No 2, March 2003, p. 131.

<sup>116</sup> Conway, ‘Commentary. Cognitive-affective mechanisms and processes in autobiographical memory’. *Memory*, p. 217.

histories become coherent and credible only by invention, often in defiance of known fact.”<sup>117</sup>

As well as reaffirming the value of the individual, reminiscence also works to enhance the social experience. As one person reminisces it often triggers memories in others. One memory leads to the next and the experience is cumulative. This social sharing of memory helps to develop relationships between people.<sup>118</sup> There is evidence that by sharing memories people develop intimacy and empathy.

Reminiscence can help develop new relationships but people tend to remember more with people they already know and recalling with a friend, people are more likely to remember more detailed information. Successful sharing also requires attentive listeners because people are more likely to continue when they consider that the listener is responsive.<sup>119</sup> Reminiscence can also help to ease anxiety. It may be used to help people facing major life changes by providing an opportunity to be part of a supportive group with shared experiences.<sup>120</sup> It is also of on-going value for emotional well-being. Reminiscence helps to resolve conflicts and assists in the development of a coherent life history which is important to the emotional health of older people.<sup>121</sup> As well as being self-confirming, socially useful and good for emotional well-being, reminiscence is also enjoyable. Gibson reports that, “Most of us, however, get enormous satisfaction from recalling the past and sharing our recollections with sympathetic, appreciative listeners.”<sup>122</sup>

Reminiscence also provides an opportunity to teach and inform. Because shared memories make conversation appear more truthful it is seen as more believable and so provides an opportunity for teaching. Martin Conway reports that there is “evidence that sharing autobiographical memories can function to develop or maintain intimacy, teach and inform, and establish empathy.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Lowenthal, ‘History and Memory’, *The Public Historian*, p. 33. Quote from Rampl ‘Memory and Imagination’ in McConkey, ed., *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology*.

<sup>118</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, pp. 16, 23.

<sup>119</sup> Alea and Bluck, ‘Why are you telling me that? A conceptual model of the social function of autobiographical memory.’ *Memory*, pp. 171, 172.

<sup>120</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, p. 22.

<sup>121</sup> Haight and Webster, (eds), *The Art and Science of Reminiscing. Theory, Research, Methods, and Applications*, p. xix.

<sup>122</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, p. 27.

<sup>123</sup> Conway, *Memory*, pp. 217-218.

While some may see reminiscence as close to oral history, because some reminiscence groups produce records of their memories it is a different discipline and more suited to informal family history.

Family carer 'Why did I leave it so late? I always meant to get Mum to tell me about the family but I never got around to it. When I was younger I was bored by her stories. When I was older I was too busy to bother. Now she's gone and we've lost her and we've lost the family history too.'<sup>124</sup>

Reminiscence has shown its value in the professional care of the elderly but the same benefits can be applied to the general population. After autobiographical memory emerges in childhood, opportunities to reminisce continue through the rest of life. Reminiscence can be enjoyable, self-affirming, educational and help develop relationships. It's an ordinary everyday activity that everyone can take part in and gain value from the experience.

The Macquarie University Museums and Collections group have applied these practices to their work with visiting exhibitions to develop an audience among elderly people living in residential complexes. An exhibition of images called *The Childhoods Past: Children's Art of The Twentieth Century* toured aged-care facilities and was presented with interpretation through the experience of memory and personal history. The group found a high level of engagement with the audience as the images were linked with personal narratives. They found that the exhibition produced a response among the audience that changed the way they viewed the images as the personal memories of the audience reinterpreted the images.

As we looked closer it was apparent that the aged care community represented an untapped resource of information - particularly in light of a historiography that captures the 'everyday history' of personal experiences. From their own memories of the dress code, hairstyles, and the composition of portraits as taken in the 1930s they were able to challenge institutional documentation and interpretation of this image [*Two Boys*]. In this case, we now only see an image portraying the relationship of a father and his son – in effect they had transformed the image and moved from passive audience to active interpreters.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Gibson, *Reminiscence and Recall*, pp. 15, 24.

<sup>125</sup> Simpson, Andrew, Davis Rhonda, Hill Kirri. 'Aged Cultural Care' in *Museums Australia Magazine*, Vol 13, No 2, November 2004, published by Museums Australia, Canberra, ACT, pp. 18-19.

This work recognises the importance of interpretation through personal experience that can be applied to other cultural heritage contexts. Memory creates a dynamic link between the audience and the object that gives the experience a context in personal experience. From this it is possible to develop meaningful interpretation that is both enjoyable for the audience and a powerful tool for the interpreter.

It is important to understand that there are many types of memory and that these may be stimulated in many different ways. Each house museum visitor will experience her or his memories in their own way. The triggers for these personal memories may be linked to any of the sensory experiences that the visitor has in the house museum. However, by knowing the difference between voluntary and involuntary, schematic and eidetic, or episodic and semantic memories, the museum interpreter can develop a better understanding of the memories of visitors and how to work with these experiences.

#### 4. Methodology

My method was to conduct interviews at Calthorpes' House using the qualitative technique of the focused interview, as described by Merton, Fiske and Kendall.<sup>126</sup>

In the focused interview, the interviewees are already known to have experienced a specific situation. In this case, the visitors had just completed a visit to a house museum. The researcher will already have made a provisional analysis of what is expected, what will be significant, what patterns may emerge and the structure of the situation. Following this methodology, my provisional analysis was based on the idea that visitors to house museums experience autobiographical memories which give them a personal link to the past and add to the enjoyment of their visit.<sup>127</sup>

Merton et al. recommend that the researcher develops an interview guide that includes the main areas of interest and the hypotheses which show why certain data is relevant. They write that the interview should focus on the interviewee's subjective experience of the situation, a situation that the researcher has already analysed, to understand the interviewees' own definition of the experience. Prior to the main interviews I developed a pilot interview and tested it with visitors to Calthorpes' House. This provided the guide for the research interviews. The research interviews aimed to record the subjective experiences of the visitors to the house museum and their interpretation of the significance of their memory experience.

This methodology is similar to the semi-structured interview technique as described by Lynda Kelly. She writes that 10-15 questions are prepared in advance. "These questions convey the focus of the interview, allow for flexibility, and enable the interviewer to become very familiar with a subject or problem area." The interview technique is informal and conversational, and the flexible approach allows the interviewees to talk about what they consider to be important.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Merton, Fiske, Kendall, *The Focused Interview. A manual of problems and procedures*, New York, Free Press; London, Collier Macmillan, c1990.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> Kelly, L., Savage, G., Griffin, J., Tonkin, S., *Knowledge Quest: Australian Families visit Museums*, A joint publication by Australian Museum and the National Museum of Australia, Sydney, 2004, p. 23.

Face-to-face interviews have both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that interviews generate a higher response than mail or telephone surveys and in this case a mail or telephone survey would not have been appropriate as I wanted to interview visitors just as they completed their visit. Another advantage of interviews is that questions can be clarified as necessary and conducting face-to-face interviews allowed me to do this. The success of interviews is not dependant on the reading skills of interviewees. The method allowed me to control the sequence of questions. The main advantage of this technique was to create a relaxed, informal, conversational atmosphere where visitors felt there were no right or wrong answers and that their personal experience was of value and interest. Open-ended questions allowed the visitor and interviewer to explore the answers in greater depth.<sup>129</sup>

Disadvantages of this technique include an increased potential for the interviewer to influence the respondent. However, while there was potential for the interviewer to influence the visitor, I conducted each interview in the same way and used open-ended questions that allowed a range of responses. The technique is labour intensive and time consuming and would have been expensive to perform with paid staff. Interviewees may tend to provide socially desirable and exaggerated responses. However, the transcripts show an engagement with the questions that suggests a genuine interest among the visitors. Unless conversations are tape recorded, some responses may go unwritten, so all the interviews were taped and transcribed. One interview was not included as most of it was lost when the tape ran out during the interview.

The questions and techniques were developed during a pilot study also conducted at Calthorpes' House.<sup>130</sup> I then conducted 40 interviews over eight sessions during April and May 2003. A group of 40-60 people is considered sufficient to provide enough responses for quantitative analysis.<sup>131</sup> I chose to interview visitors over weekends when they are not confined to guided tour times. I interviewed only adult visitors. The interviews took from five to 30 minutes depending on the enthusiasm of the visitor to discuss the subjects raised. I interviewed as many visitors as I was able to in each session.

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<sup>129</sup> Nicols, Susan K. (compiler) and Adams, Roxana (series editor), *Visitor Surveys: A User's Manual*, American Association of Museums, Washington DC, USA, 1999, p. 9 and p. 86.

<sup>130</sup> A full list of interview questions is included in the appendix.

<sup>131</sup> Diamond, Judy, *Practical Evaluation Guide Tools for Museums and other Informal Educational Settings*. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 1999. p. 41.

I requested interview participation from each person as they completed their visit of the house. Only two people refused, both due to time commitments. During the period while I was at the house I recorded the pattern of male and female visiting. I then attempted to balance male and female interviews to this pattern by specifically asking males to participate when a mixed group completed a tour. Without prior knowledge of the visitors to Calthorpes' House it was not possible to use representational sampling techniques as suggested by some authorities.<sup>132</sup>

### **Quantitative research**

The research included a quantitative element to collect demographic data about the visitors to Calthorpes' House. This included recording the gender, place of birth, place where the person grew up, place of residence, year of birth, if they had visited Calthorpes' House before and if they had visited any other house museums in the past 12 months. This aim of these questions was to develop a profile of the adult visitors to Calthorpes' House. I have compared this information with visitors to other house museums where this information is available.

The sample size needed for a population of 5000 people (Calthorpes' House had 6524 visitors in 2002-2003) is 94 for a +/- 10 per cent sampling error, rising to 95 for 10,000 people. 880 responses would be required for a +/- 3 per cent sampling error for a population of 5000. Sampling error represents the potential for error when gathering data from a sample rather than an entire population. As the research only included 40 people the sampling error is greater than 10 per cent.<sup>133</sup>

### **Qualitative Research**

I followed Diamond's suggestion to use quantitative and qualitative research methods together. The advantages of qualitative methods are that they provide depth and detail. While they may describe trends, they can also give information about the exceptions. This method allowed the collection of direct quotations from visitors, and an open-ended narrative structure for interviews. Diamond writes that qualitative methods are a "very

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<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42.

effective way of understanding complex phenomena that cannot be easily summarized into discrete categories.”<sup>134</sup>

The aim of the qualitative interview technique was to develop a description of the memory experience at Calthorpes' House and its value to visitors. I asked visitors if they experienced memories during their visit and, if so, what prompted those memories. I asked them about their memories, especially links to places and people. I asked them if they shared their memories with anyone else during their visit and about responses to those memories from other people. I asked if they expected to experience memories when they decided to visit. I asked if their memories made a difference to their visit and if they would prompt them to visit Calthorpes' House again or to visit other house museums.

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<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22-23.

## 5. Results and Analysis

### **Introduction to Calthorpes' House**

Calthorpes' House, Mugga Way, is a house museum run by the ACT Cultural Facilities Corporation in Canberra. The house was built and furnished in 1927 and remained with the original owners until 1984 when it was purchased complete with furniture and fittings by the then federal Department of Territories. It is the integrity of the building and contents that makes Calthorpes' House so valuable as a house museum.<sup>135</sup>

The house is staffed by paid employees and is open to the public three days a week and at weekends from 1.30-4.30pm. The house also operates a schools program and a public program of special events.

Visitors to the house, if they arrive by car, park in a specially reserved area of the front garden and walk around the front and side of the house to the garage at the back of the house to purchase tickets. There is a small introductory exhibition about the house and Calthorpe family in the garage. From here, visitors either join a guided tour (during weekdays) or self-guide (during weekends). They can explore the garden before or after visiting the interior of the house. Visitors are directed to return to the front of the house where they put on booties to protect the interior floor coverings from their shoes. This is also an opportunity for guides to explain the fragile nature of some of the contents of the house and to remind visitors that they are entering a museum.

Visitors are greeted at the front door by a member of the staff and welcomed into the house. From the entry hall they enter the sitting room. If time and visitor numbers permit, a staff member may play the pianola and sing a song of the period for visitors in the sitting room. The sitting and dining rooms are linked, they are furnished in the popular taste of the day, described as "fashionable but not stylish".<sup>136</sup> These were the public rooms that were used to entertain guests.

Visitors then walk through the dining room to the kitchen. The kitchen and laundry area are the working part of the house. The kitchen design and appliances represent the latest in methods and technology of the 1920s. The laundry contains a

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<sup>135</sup> Bickford, Anne, *Calthorpes' House. A museum guide*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1987.

<sup>136</sup> *Calthorpes' House*, leaflet ACT Administration, Office of City Management, 40 000/5/88 (2).

wood-fired heater, extensive heating troughs and a hand warmer and is complete with laundry racks. In this area visitors can also see the maid's quarters and the pantry.

From the kitchen, visitors move into the private family section of the house. The formal front room was used as a family room and contains trophies, photographs and family memorabilia. It is also the only place in the house in which visitors are invited to sit down. Here they can examine historical maps, photographs and newspapers of the period.

A hallway leads to the bathroom and three bedrooms. The bathroom is a large en-suite room in the style of a modern bathroom, with a shower, toilet and hygiene. The bedrooms are in the rear of the house.



adult group tickets are not broken down into numbers of individual visitors it is not

possible to give **Calthorpes' House, Mugga Way, from the front garden, 2004.**

the family tickets represent two adult and adult group tickets representing four adults this would give a total of 1072 adult visitors in April 2007 and 377 adult visitors for May a total of 1449 adult visitors for the interview period. The interview group of 40 visitors represents 3.5 per cent of the total for these months, or 0.6 per cent of the annual total.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Council of the City of Sydney Annual Report 2006/2007.

<sup>127</sup> [www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/html/39/Access\\_02\\_03.pdf](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/html/39/Access_02_03.pdf)

<sup>128</sup> [www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/html/39/Access\\_02\\_03.pdf](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/html/39/Access_02_03.pdf)

wood-fired copper, concrete washing troughs and a hand wringer and is complete with laundry tools. In this area visitors can also see the maid's room and the pantry.

From the kitchen, visitors move into the private family section of the house. The breakfast room was used as a family room and contains trophies, photographs and family mementoes. It is also the only place in the interior of the house where visitors are invited to sit down. Here they can examine laminated maps, photographs and newspapers of the period.

A hallway leads to the bathroom and three bedrooms. The bathroom is a large white-tiled room in the style of the 1920s with an emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene. One bedroom is set up as a child's room with a collection of children's toys. Mrs Calthorpe's bedroom contains a collection of family photographs. From the main bedroom visitors exit the house to the front veranda where they remove their booties and can have tea and biscuits while sitting on the seats and enjoying the view of the garden.

### **Visitor statistics**

Unfortunately there is little published data about visitors to house museums to compare the data from Calthorpes' House with. Numbers published in the annual reports of the ACT Cultural Facilities Corporation and the Historic House Trust of New South Wales give some indication of total visitor numbers and the division of domestic and international visitors.

The Cultural Facilities Corporation Annual Report 2002-2003 gives a total of 6524 visitors to Calthorpes' House for the 2002-2003 period.<sup>137</sup> Because family and adult group tickets are not broken down into numbers of individual visitors it is not possible to give a precise number of adult visitors for each month. However, if I assume that family tickets represent two adults and adult group tickets represent four adults this would give a total of 667 adult visitors for April 2003 and 375 adult visitors for May, a total of 1042 adult visitors for the interview period. The interview group of 40 visitors represents 3.8 per cent of the total for these months, or 0.6 per cent of the annual total.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Cultural Facilities Corporation Annual Report 2002-2003.  
[www.museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au/info/CFCAnnrep\\_02\\_03.pdf](http://www.museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au/info/CFCAnnrep_02_03.pdf)

<sup>138</sup> Visitor breakdown figures in appendix.

This is a small sample but sufficient to be useful for qualitative research (see chapter 4 Methodology).

I interviewed 24 female and 16 male visitors. Having counted all the visitors during the interview period at Calthorpes' House I found that the ratio was about five female to three male visitors (62.5 per cent female to 37.5 per cent male). Merriman's research in the UK suggest that men are more likely to be frequent or non-museum visitors than women, while women are more likely to be regular, occasional or rare visitors.<sup>139</sup> Figures for the National Museum of Australia in Canberra are 46 per cent male and 54 per cent female visitors.<sup>140</sup>

From this information it appears that Calthorpes' House attracts a high percentage of female visitors than general museums and anecdotal information from other house museums suggests a similar pattern. This may reflect greater female interest in the domestic museum as this has been the traditional workplace for women. It may also reflect women's role in family history, as Hamilton and Ashton write in their survey of Australians, "women appear to be in the majority as custodians and communicators of the intimate and domestic past."<sup>141</sup> If these visitor figures are correct, it is useful information because it might encourage those marketing house museums to target either a female-specific audience, or look at ways to attract more men to house museums.

Nearly half the visitors, 47.5 per cent, gave ACT postcodes as their current address; 35 per cent gave NSW postcodes; 10 per cent were from other states: two Queensland visitors, one from Victoria and one from South Australia. 7.5 per cent of visitors interviewed were from overseas: one from the UK, one from Hong Kong and one from New Zealand.

The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales gives a breakdown of visitors to all its properties. This shows that 45 per cent of visitors came from Sydney (the city where most of its properties are located); 11 per cent from regional NSW; five per cent from Victoria; and 4 per cent from Queensland. International visitors made up 30 per cent of visitors to all Historic House Trust properties.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 50.

<sup>140</sup> Visitor statistics for the National Museum of Australia supplied by Susan Tonkin.

<sup>141</sup> Hamilton, Paula and Ashton, Paul, 'Australians and the Past', p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> *Annual Report. Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2002-2003*, pp. 16 and 17.

Like the Historic Houses Trust properties, visitors to Calthorpes' House mainly come from the nearby area (47.5 per cent from the ACT). Calthorpes' House attracted a greater per centage of regional visitors (35 per cent from NSW) than the Historic Houses Trusts properties (11 per cent regional NSW) and a similar percentage of interstate visitors (Calthorpes' House, 10 per cent; Historic Houses Trust, 9 per cent).

The local visitors are especially important to Calthorpes' House as they have a greater opportunity for repeat visits, they are more likely to bring friends from inter-state or overseas, and they can be contacted more easily through local media. Local visitors can help to promote Calthorpes' House through word-of-mouth to other people who are easily able to visit because they live in the area. Word-of-mouth seems to be the way most people hear about, and the reason they decide to visit, museums.<sup>143</sup>

More than 80 per cent of the visitors were born after 1940 and so later than the period of the house.<sup>144</sup> However this did not prevent the younger visitors having memories of similar houses if their parents' or grandparents' houses contained similar objects or offered similar experiences. This time lag reflects slow changes in the way people lived, especially prior to the economic boom of the 1960s and 70s. The differences in memories between different age groups are couched in generational terms. What is first-hand experience to the older visitor becomes things my parents had or did, and then things my grandparents had or did to younger visitors.

The age of nearly half visitors (47.5 per cent) falls between thirty-three and fifty-two years old which is comparable with the findings of the Australian Museum Audience Research Centre that 30-50 year olds are the most prominent age group in museum surveys.<sup>145</sup> However, 42.5 per cent of visitors were born before 1950 which suggests that Calthorpes' House attracts an important segment of older visitors. As the population ages, museums that attract older visitors will become more frequently visited.<sup>146</sup> Working to ensure museums and house museums meet the needs and interests of older visitors will help to improve the experience for these visitors.

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<sup>143</sup> Falk and Dierking, *The Museum Experience*, p. 28.

<sup>144</sup> See appendix for breakdown of visitor age.

<sup>145</sup> Kelly, Lynda, Australian Museum Audience Research Centre, 2002, [www.amonline.net.au](http://www.amonline.net.au)

<sup>146</sup> Kelly, et al. *Energised, Engaged, Everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*.

Most visitors came with family members (70 per cent), while 25 per cent came with friends, two people (five per cent) came alone. This confirms the importance of house museum visitation as a social activity. However while most museums report the importance of family group visitors as adults with school-age children, the families at Calthorpes' House were often older parents with adult children and their partners. Some visitors reported that the visit was initiated by the younger adults who had brought older family members to the house because they thought that they would enjoy it. This is a reversal of the pattern of visitation by younger families to museums where children are brought to the museum by their parents because they think that the children will enjoy the visit. This may be a demonstration of the enduring engagement with museums developed by children who not only continue to visit museums themselves as adults, but also take their children and their parents and friends. The importance of house museum visits as a social and family activity suggests that these visits are seen as positive group activities. For this reason, interpretation based on themes relating to family and friends shows great promise.

Calthorpes' House attracts repeat visits, 17.5 per cent of people said that they had visited the house before. This is higher than the figure of seven per cent of people who said they found out about a property by a previous visit in the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales survey.<sup>147</sup> The higher percentage of repeat visits may be due to the more limited stock of museums in the ACT when compared with Sydney. However it is also an indication of visitor satisfaction with the experience. Many repeat visitors reported that they often brought friends and relatives from inter-state or overseas to Calthorpes' House.

Many visitors visit other house museums, 62.5 per cent said that they had visited other house museums in the past 12 months. Merriman's UK survey found that 34 per cent of people made a visit to a historic house once or twice a year, and 47 per cent visited at least once a year.<sup>148</sup> The number of visits to house museums suggests that those who visit house museums enjoy their visits and like to visit other house museums.

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<sup>147</sup> *Annual Report Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2002-2003*. Inside front cover.

<sup>148</sup> Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case*, p. 51.

The people who visit several house museums a year appear to be satisfied with what they find on these visits. The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales found that 91 per cent of their visitors said that they liked their visit a lot.<sup>149</sup>

When asked if the experience of the memories triggered by the visit would make them want to return to Calthorpes' House 62.5 per cent of people said they would come again. However, it is hard to make the distinction of how much the motivation to return was specifically based on the experience of the memories. When visitors were asked if they had visited Calthorpes' House before 17.5 per cent said that they had. From this it seems unlikely that the 62.5 per cent of people who said they would come again would actually do so.

The decision to return is also based on ease of access: people who live close to Calthorpes' House can return at any time, those who live further away are less likely to return. Of those who said they would not come back, seven were from states other than NSW or from overseas, leaving 20 per cent of visitors from the ACT or NSW who said they would not return.

In summary, visitors to Calthorpes' House are more likely to be female than visitors to museums in general, they often live locally in the ACT, they are aged over 50 and come to the house with other members of their family. A significant number have visited Calthorpes' House before and a large number will have visited other house museums in the past year.

### **Memories at Calthorpes' House**

The qualitative part of the research gives an indication of trends of visitor experiences. Some visitors were highly engaged by these questions and provided long and detailed responses. The experience of memory in the context of Calthorpes' House is near universal for visitors and the majority report that this is an enjoyable experience. Many also enjoy sharing their memories with friends and family.

When asked, "Was there anything in the house that reminded you of something in your life?" All the interviewees replied yes. I was surprised by this response. I had

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<sup>149</sup> *Annual Report Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2002-2003*. Inside front cover.

expected that a majority of visitors would report experiencing memories but I had not expected a 100 per cent positive response. This supports the anecdotal evidence that visitors experience memories and answers my first research question: What proportion of visitors to house museums experience personal memories triggered by their experience?

My next research question was: Which experiences or objects trigger memories? Asking visitors "What was it in the house that made you remember?" brought a wide range of responses that indicated that many of the objects and experiences in the house have the potential to trigger memories.

Order of number of people who mentioned:

Laundry copper	13
Kitchen fuel stove	9
Pianola	7
Furniture	7
Utensils	7
Wood	7
Smell	6
Plate rail	6
Ice chest	5
Kitchen	5
Low light levels	5

A large number of other items also drew responses from other visitors.<sup>150</sup>

The copper in the laundry drew the largest number of responses. Many visitors remembered family members doing the laundry in similar coppers.

When we moved back from Sydney my grandmother still had a copper boiler and a hand wringer, triple tubs, pulling the sheets out of the copper with a stick into a tub to rinse it and into another one. Monday was definitely washing day.  
(39. b. Sydney, 1944, grew up Melbourne, visit with family.)<sup>151</sup>

The copper in the laundry and the wooden stick. I can definitely remember helping my mother with the wash, dragging it out with the wooden stick and keeping the fire going.  
(36. b. Melbourne, 1922, grew up Geelong, visit with family.)

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<sup>150</sup> See appendix for the complete list.

<sup>151</sup> The details in brackets at the end of quotes refer to the number of the interview, place where person was born, year of birth, where grew up, who visit with.



The power of the laundry and copper to trigger memories may be due to a number of reasons. Washing was a weekly event and its regular occurrence would have laid down schematic memories for many visitors – either as participants or observers. The events of washing day would have created multi-sensory impressions that included the sight of someone working to wash the clothes; the smell of the fire’s smoke and the soap; the sound of the boiling water and the clothes being moved in the water; the touch of slippery soap and wet clothing; and possibly even the taste of soapy water. The physical work of doing the washing would have created kinetic memories for those who did the work and for those who helped with it.

Memories of washing were often linked with people who were significant to visitors such as mothers and grandmothers. Memories may also have been triggered by of the novelty of seeing this kind of laundry again. As washing machines gained general usage the copper and washday was superseded by a machine and a process with fewer sensory inputs. Without the exposure to sensory and kinetic triggers, people are less likely to remember or think about the process. The novelty of seeing something not experienced for some time is likely to trigger memories.

The fuel stove in the kitchen was also mentioned by several interviewees. This can also be linked with the smell of the wood smoke mentioned by other visitors.

And the fuel stove is great. It’s just walking straight into home when you smell that smoke. (15. b. NSW 1931, grew up country, visit with family.)

Other unidentified smells also brought back memories.

And, I don’t mean this in a bad way, but the house has a sort of ...smell sounds bad. A sort of an odour. Which I’m not quite sure what it is, but it’s in character. (2. b. Germany, 1946, grew up Melbourne, visit alone.)

The furnishings, actually, the older furnishings and the fabrics have a particular smell. I don’t know if it’s musty. Just older houses, I think maybe it’s the wood. The large amount of wood in the house, the varnished wood. (1. b. NSW, 1977, grew up Sydney, visit with partner.)

Smell is a potent cue for memory and some historic sites have considered creating appropriate smells for their venues. For example, the smell of poverty for reconstructed peasant’s cottage at Buckler’s Hard, UK. “Poverty’s odour was not specified, but

Danforth's best-selling service book suggested to use a possible blend of cooked cabbage, carrots, and mashed butter beans.<sup>100</sup>

Calthorpes' House has the advantage of being able to create authentic smells by the use of the best vintage period cleaning materials (such as wax, wood polish) and period household products in the parlour, bathroom and bedroom. Like the laundry, the value of smelling something that has been studied for many years and is linked in a period, place or person is likely to be a much stronger one. Cleaning smells of today are unlikely to have the same effect, a perfume being sold that was also used to be had a chance to be laid down in a perfume house or even a perfume house.



The kitchen at Calthorpes' House. As a complete room, the kitchen triggered the most memories for visitors.

The American sociologist, George Parkes March who stressed the importance of the everyday:

March urged the conservation of history as well as nature, but sought to preserve the artifacts of everyday life rather than the great achievements of antiquity. It was not the accomplishments of professional elites that would remind Americans of

<sup>100</sup>Wright, 29 Dec. 1983 quoted in Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 343. Also at 2004, <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1093/oxfordjournals.ajph.a011111>.

Beaulieu's technical services head suggested to me a possible blend of cooked cabbage, excreta, and unwashed human bodies."<sup>152</sup>

Calthorpes' House has the advantage of being able to create authentic smells by the use of the fuel stove, period cleaning materials (such as wax wood polish) and period household products in the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Like the laundry, the value of smelling something that has not been smelled for some time and is linked to a period, place or person is likely to bring back memories. Everyday smells of today are unlikely to have the same effect at present but a smell that was once usual (and so had a chance to be laid down as a memory) but is now uncommon, will often trigger memory.

The pianola, furnishings, wood panelling and kitchen utensils brought seven responses each. The pianola was particularly memorable for those visitors who a chance to hear it being played, giving aural as well as visual cues to memory.

The old pianola, one of my nannas had one of those and we used have great get-togethers around that would somebody playing the pianola and two of my uncles had violins, so they put those out, and everyone else played on the comb with paper. We used to have wonderful get-togethers.  
(5. b. NSW 1957, grew up country, visit with friends.)

Smells and sounds are potent memory triggers and these non-visual cues help to create the depth of authenticity that makes the house museum so attractive to visitors. Where the smells in the house often triggered general memories of places, the sound and visual stimulation of seeing someone play the pianola triggered memories that were linked to specific people as well as places.

The kitchen utensils also reminded visitors of their pasts. Lowenthal wrote about the American ecologist, George Perkins Marsh who stressed the importance of the everyday:

Marsh urged the conservation of history as well as nature, but sought to preserve the artefacts of everyday life rather than the great monuments of antiquity. It was not the accoutrements of princes and prelates that would remind Americans of

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<sup>152</sup> Willrich, 25 Jan. 1985 quoted in Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 347. Also at Jorvik viking reconstruction in York, UK.

their antecedents, but the tools of field and workshop, the household implements and customary trappings of their own forebears.<sup>153</sup>

Visitors to Calthorpes' House responded to the kitchen utensils, often linking them to the person who they had seen use them.

Oh lots of things I saw reminded me of... the old mix master and mostly in the kitchen, things in the kitchen, reminded me of my childhood. I guess my mother used to have things like that cause she emigrated out from Holland and brought a lot of the things with her because she didn't think that Australia had this sort of thing here. So she decided she'd bring most of it with her.

(3. b. Holland, 1957, grew up Canberra, visit with friends.)

And lots of little things in the kitchen, particularly the tiling around stove, is it around stove in the kitchen? I can't remember now, but my nanna had those similar tiles, and she had old Dutch windmill canisters on the mantelpiece above the old cooker, so that really brought back memories of Saturday, cooking day with nanna on summer holidays.

(5. b. NSW 1957, grew up country, visit with friends.)

Like the laundry, the kitchen was a place of activity and multi-sensory experience, often linked with significant people and the enjoyment of eating. The items in the kitchen span a longer period than those in other parts of the house showing changes such as the fuel-burning and electric stoves. The items found in Calthorpes' kitchen might have been found in a wide range of kitchens in different parts of Australia with items used by all classes and income groups rather than being specific to suburban middle-class life.

Taken as a complete room, the kitchen triggered the most memories for visitors. The kitchen or items in the room were mentioned 44 times by visitors.

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<sup>153</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. xvii.

Kitchen	Number of mentions by visitors
Stove	9
Utensils	7
Kitchen (in general)	5
Ice chest	5
Lino	3
Mixmaster	2
Cleaners	2
Kooka	2
Metters stove	2
Tiles	1
Toaster	1
Saucepans	1
Kitchen sink	1
Refrigerator	1
Bread box	1
Groceries/stores	1
Total	44

This compares with the number of mentions linked to other rooms: laundry 18; lounge 12; bathroom 7; child's room 7; adult bedroom 6. The other rooms may not have triggered so many memories because they were not linked to so many sensory and kinetic experiences. The kitchen offers so many items that, numerically at least, there are more likely to be memory triggers among them. The furnishings in the sitting, dining and bedrooms may be more closely linked with a specific period and income than the working parts of the house (kitchen and laundry).

The low light levels of the interior of the house were mentioned by five visitors as a trigger for memory. Visual memory cues do not necessarily mean objects, the low light levels can also trigger memory.

the darkness of the corridors and so forth reminded me of some of the houses we've in England when I was younger, not our house but one friend's, their house was...How old was Tilba and Robert's house? 1800 and something? It was dark in hallways and things. It reminded me of that.  
(40. b. 1978 Vic, grew up city, visit with family.)

Memories were triggered by a wide range of experiences in the house; from the visual stimulation of objects and the low light levels of the rooms, to the sound of the pianola and the smell of the wood smoke. These are involuntary rather than voluntary

memories. They are not triggered by consciously thinking about a place or person but by an experience. "It is not introspection that yields these heightened recollections, but the chance reactivation of forgotten sensations, commonly a touch or smell or taste or sound."<sup>154</sup>

This triggering of memory by objects and sensory experiences accords with the memory research described in this thesis. Familiar objects and smells in the domestic context are likely to trigger visitors' memories of places and people from their personal experience. Calthorpes' House has the advantage of being able to offer a wide variety of triggers from visual cues of familiar objects and general light levels, to smells (wood smoke, cleaning products, face powder), and sound (pianola). Touch and taste were not specifically mentioned by visitors but these senses may be stimulated by special programs that also include kinetic experiences such as making jams and preserves or cooking on the fuel stove.<sup>155</sup>

My next research question was, What sort of memories do visitors experience? When I asked visitors "What did the (object/smell/experience) make you remember?" they talked about particular life experiences, notably childhood, and particular people, usually family members, and places.

What sort of memories	Number of responses
Childhood	33
Grandparent's house	22
Parent's house	13
Own house	5
Other relative's house	5
Friends' house	3

Childhood memories were the most common for all visitors. Most of these childhood memories were reported as general memories: in the psychological

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<sup>154</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 203.

<sup>155</sup> See for example, *Experience. Calendar of Events* February 02-July 02. Cultural Facilities Corporation, p. 6.

terminology, schemata, rather than as flashback or eidetic memories. However, one visitor shared a vivid memory of childhood triggered by seeing the kitchen.

We went down to the foreshore at the bottom of Taronga Park Zoo. It was a beautiful day, it might have been autumn or spring because it had that crisp clearness, cleanness. And picked all these oysters and pipis and mussels and stuff and went back, and I remember the table with this huge mound of shells from the shellfish and everybody laughing and very happy and feeling a bit sunburnt. I still can feel the sun on my face in the afternoon as it was setting towards the Harbour Bridge. I remember having a jumper on because it was quite cool, and the warmth of the sun on my face. Beautiful.

*That's a tremendously vivid memory.*

Absolutely.

*How old would you have been?*

About four. We left there when I was five.

(10. b. Sydney 1962, grew up city, visit with partner.) Interviewer in italics.

This personal memory appears to have little direct connection with Calthorpes' House but it is an example of the involuntary personal memories that visitors experience that take them back to other times, places and people while they are visiting the house museum. Childhood memories were mentioned most often by interviewees and were frequently linked to memories of grandparents and extended family members.

I think so because it's an era that you perhaps didn't live in yourself particularly but you remember your wider family, extended family, and your grandparents living in houses, not exactly the same, but very similar.

(31. b. Wellington, NZ 1935, grew up city, visit with family.)

It just brought back lovely memories, as a child. As I walked through and into the main bedroom I could visualise my grandmother sitting there with her loose powder and sort of puffing her powder on her. It did, I found it quite an emotional experience, and also with the pianola, growing up with my grandmother.

(34. b. Temora, NSW 1952, grew up country, visit with family.)

Some visitors experienced memories of their parents and the houses that they grew up in.

Yes, it's a very special thing to be transported back to your childhood home. It made me think, it was something I was talking about, about my mother earlier before I came here, even though it was a very simple home she was a great

housekeeper and she gave up work when she had four children and so it was the way she would polish the lino and keep this really simple, that was a memory. (35. b. Sydney 1948, grew up city, visit with friend.)

Older visitors could relate more directly with the period of the house and how life was lived there.

The floors, we'd have lino in some rooms or else we'd have carpet but then the wooden, the carpet was in the middle, carpet square, and then you'd have wooden floors that you varnished all around. Oh yes, every Friday we used to have to do that and get down on our hands and knees and polish. We used to hate Fridays. We used to hate Mondays, Mondays was washing day, Fridays was cleaning and polishing and scrubbing, scrub the front veranda and scrub the back veranda. (36. b. Melbourne 1922, grew up town, visit with family.)

While older visitors had first-hand experience of the era of the house that linked directly to memories of personal experience, younger visitors were also able to connect their memories to the house through parents and grandparents. This may be because many domestic interiors survived sufficiently unchanged from the 1920s and 30s for people who saw them in the 1940s or later to recognise them at Calthorpes' House.

Childhood memories were the most common, partly due to the age of the visitors when compared with the period of the house which meant that most visitors would have experienced interiors like Calthorpes' House when they were children either in their own homes or at grandparents' or other relatives' houses. Childhood is also the time when strong memories and schemata will be laid down, especially of novel experiences such as visiting grandparents or recurrent events such as wash day.

When visitors were asked "When you decided to visit the house did you expect it to help you remember anything?" 30 per cent of people said yes, they expected to experience memories. These memories are more likely to be voluntary memories because people were already thinking about the past before their visit, however they may not be able to foresee all the memory triggers in the house and may experience involuntary memories as well. Of those 12 people who expected memories, only four had visited Calthorpes' House before. People who had visited before knew what to expect and were able to return with other people who they wanted to share the experience with. Two of

the eight people who had not visited the house before (but said they expected memories) said that other people had told them what to expect at the house.

Yes, well Barbara and Helen saw it, and Mike, and they knew I'd like it because they knew that's the kind of thing I had. Because she's very familiar with her grandmother's house, of see. All the family have been there and there's a part of the family still living there.

(14. b. 1918 Grafton, grew up country, visit with family.)

Of the remaining six, who had not visited Calthorpes' House before, five said that they had visited other house museums that had brought back memories and so they expected Calthorpes' House to do the same.

We've just been to Blundells so we thought that would be a similar type of thing, although we've since learnt its bit different, and this place. We were in the area we knew where Red Hill and everything was so, we thought we must go and see it. The person we're with too, he's wandering around somewhere, said his parents are 1930 and his parents have kept everything, it's very similar.

(23. b. London, 1946, grew up London, visit with family.)

Yes, I suppose I did because it's a bit like going to Rose Seidler's cottage. I remember we did that a few years ago and you know, 'Oh Mum had one of them', that sort of thing. So yes, I suppose you have to expect that. And because knowing that this was a more middle class story then you more expect to find things that you would had, or your grandmother would of had in her home.

(25. b. Sydney, 1954, grew up Sydney, visit with family.)

These responses suggest a pattern of memories triggered by other house museums, which mirrors my observations of visitors at Lanyon, another house museum in the ACT. It also suggests that some visitors enjoy these memory experiences and consciously seek them out in other house museums and actively encourage others to do so too.

When visitors were asked if they enjoyed experiencing their memories, 80 per cent said that it was an enjoyable part of their visit, while only 35 per cent considered their memories important to their visit, and 50 per cent said their memories made a difference. These differences in degree of engagement with memory suggest that the majority of people find the memory experience enjoyable. Those who expect to experience memories are not necessarily those who consider them to be important. Of the

14 people who expected memories, only six (less than half) said that memories were an important part of their visit.

Visitors to Calthorpes' House experience a wide range of memories: voluntary, involuntary, schematic, eidetic, episodic and semantic. The memories were often of people who were important to them, especially from their childhoods. They remembered the domestic tasks that these people used to do and the places where they lived.

I also wanted to know how visitors use these memories. Most visitors to Calthorpes' House come with family or friends (95 per cent). The significance of the social aspect of museum visits has been demonstrated by other researchers who found that people rarely forget the social aspects of a visit, even when they remember little else.<sup>156</sup>

All visitors reported experiencing memories at the house and many people chose to share those memories. Sharing memories helps to build trust and intimacy between people as well as being an effective teaching tool. Sharing common memories also helps to reinforce those memories and two or more people with knowledge of the same event can often remember more as they share their individual memories. This is the way that family memories are strengthened and passed on between family members. As Lowenthal explains, "Sharing and validating memories sharpens them and promotes their recall; events we alone know about are less certainly, less easily evoked."<sup>157</sup>

Falk and Dierking also consider sharing information in the context of museum visits, "Family members talk about what they know from previous experiences and memories... these discussions provide opportunities for parents to reinforce past experiences and family history and develop a shared understanding among family members."<sup>158</sup>

In response to the question, "While you were going around the house did you tell anyone about your memories?" 82.5 per cent of visitors asked reported sharing their memories during their visit. Of the other seven visitors who did not share their memories, two visited alone and the other five were visiting with their families. There was no common pattern to those five who did not share memories. Most visitors want to share

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<sup>156</sup> Falk and Dierking, *The Museum Visit*, p. 54.

<sup>157</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 196.

<sup>158</sup> Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*, p. 25.

their memories, and while many have friends or family with them to share with even those who visit alone may want to share their memories if given an opportunity.

Visitors reported sharing memories with family, friends, or, in one case, with the guide, rather than with other visiting groups. Often the family or group of friends had shared experiences so the memories were not new information but a confirmation of something that was already known.

And the three of us were going round and saying, 'Oh, that was in the house at Helentown.' 'Oh, no grandma had that.' This was the sort, it brought memory back more than anything.

(31. b. Wellington NZ, 1935, grew up city, visit with family.)

*Who did you tell?*

I told Joy, my friend.

*And what did she think about that? Was she interested?*

Yes, because we shared each other's memories.

*So she told you about..*

Yes, I'd say did you have one of those? And she said, yes I remember that.

I think it's probably interesting, I'm 55 and my friend's probably 10 years older and to our generation I think it's quite fascinating, I just wonder about young children coming through here, what engages them?

(35. b. Sydney, 1948, grew up city, visit with friend.)

Well she was the one who actually spoke up about it and then it sort of recalled it all to me and also she remembered there was an old lady who my sister and my other sister used to clean for in Sydney, Mrs Witton, who was an opera singer and her house was very similar too. And had the same linoleum which my sisters had to polish for her.

One sister loved sitting down and talking to this old opera diva and so would polish the floor from the back door in to the kitchen table and my other sister was not so keen so she used to polish from the table to the back door and then depart.

(17. b. UK, 1964, grew up city, visit with family.)

These examples of family and group memories that are recalled and reconfirmed or developed by sharing. This technique is also used in reminiscence work to develop trust and intimacy.

When asked "What did they say?" 29 of the 33 people who reported sharing memories said that the person they told was interested in their memories, creating a situation where the person sharing their memories had a responsive listener. Study into

reminiscence work shows that responsive listeners are an important part of the enjoyment of shared memories.

When asked, "Do you feel that your memories made any difference to your visit?" 50 per cent of people said yes.

I think it did really. It made it feel different from other historic places. Other historic houses were just like a bit of history whereas this was a bit of my past. (2. b Germany, 1946. Grew up Melbourne, visit alone.)

While people may be reluctant to term their memories as "important" they were more likely to say that the experience of their memories made a difference to their visit. This suggests that the personal connection people feel when they experience a memory in the house gives their visit an extra dimension.

Psychological and reminiscence studies show the important role that memory plays in self-reconfirmation, in making and sharing personal histories, and in developing relationships. Visitors use their memories to share experiences and develop bonds. Most wanted to share their memories as they helped them connect to the house and to the people they were visiting with. If we consider that visitors are looking for a social experience when they visit a house museum, this sharing of memories can be seen as an important aspect of the social occasion.

From this study we can conclude that almost all visitors will experience memories in Calthorpes' House and these memories are most likely to be triggered by the kitchen or laundry. The triggers may be objects, sounds, smells or other sensory experiences. The memories are likely to be from the visitors' childhood and include significant people from their past. The degree of direct involvement in the activity remembered will depend of the age of the visitor and how it relates to the period of the house. Some visitors expect to experience memories but the majority do not arrive with that preconception. Most visitors will come with family members and will enjoy the social experience of sharing memories.

## 6. Conclusion

### **Significance of findings**

The findings of this research increase the understanding of visitor thought processes and activities in house museums. They reveal how visitors use personal memory to connect to the past and to share their experiences. The research study has been successful in placing visitor memory into the context of the house museum visit, making connections with other heritage visitor surveys and the psychological understanding of the process of memory making and recall. From an anecdotal base there is now research evidence of visitor memory experiences in house museums.

The interview techniques have been successful in answering the research questions. By using the focused interview method and allowing a flexible, conversational approach, the transcripts provide a wealth of information about visitor memory experiences in house museums and help to develop the understanding of these processes.

This study was designed to explore the experience of memory in house museums. It has succeeded in providing an understanding of visitor experiences, confirming the widespread incidence of memory experiences among visitors, enumerating a range of objects and experiences that trigger memory, categorising the types of memory visitors experience, and detailing the use visitors make of these memories.

These results can be used by house museum staff to inform interpretation and other managerial functions such as authentic housekeeping and targeted publicity and so increase the effectiveness of the site to connect with visitors and develop their understanding of the past.

### **Understanding the role of memory**

Memory is important to everyone: from small children learning about the world to older people recalling their lives. It is a way we define ourselves as individuals. Our memories make us who we are, they are our personal history.

Memory is the way people link their personal experience to a wider history. Personal experience creates a different kind of understanding of the past and its events than learning about history in ways that are removed from immediate experience.

Personal experience creates an individual link to the past that is unique to that person. Memory is also creative; it allows people to interpret their own experience in their own way. It is malleable and is shaped and shaped again by new experiences. Through memory, people create their own narratives of the past, which they may share with others.

Shared experience allows the creation and shaping of shared memories. This does not mean that people who share memories will have the same memories but that aspects of memory may be reinforced or changed by sharing. Sharing personal memory is also a way of creating connections and intimacy between people: a grandparent shares stories of his childhood with a grandchild; a couple share memories of their lives before they met; sisters share memories of the experience of growing up together. These experiences of shared memories are often pleasurable. A shared memory and a responsive listener create an opportunity to develop a relationship between family members or with others outside the family. Sharing a memory allows a person the chance to define themselves to the listener and have that self-definition reaffirmed. It develops a connection between people that is based on intimacy and trust.

Personal memory is an experience that everyone knows. This personal connection to the past is a starting point that can develop into a wider understanding of a more general history. Knowing that a visitor to a historic site begins to interact with the site with their personal memories is a basis for interpretation that connects the visitor to the site. From this is it possible to build on those connections to a wider understanding of the history of the site. Personal memory is an experience that offers a foundation on which to build interpretation.

### **House museums**

My final research question was: Can this personal engagement with a heritage site through memory be used to inform interpretation and in other managerial functions such as authentic housekeeping and targeted publicity?

House museums have outstanding potential as sources of memory triggers and managers need to understand how visitors are likely to react to the objects and sensory experiences in the house. Because each visitor comes with their own memories of the

past it is difficult to predict which objects or experiences will trigger memories for which visitors. Surveys can show which objects and experiences trigger the most memories but there will be such a wide range that it would be limiting to concentrate only on the most popular. It is the density of authentic objects in house museums that provide the variety and number of memory triggers. Authenticity is important because memory triggers are not based on a single sense. The trigger may not be in the visual appearance of the object but, for example, in the texture of its surface or its smell. Authentic objects help to create the dense, multi-layered context of the house museum that is so potent for visitors.

Objects are not the only triggers to memory and it is important to consider the value of stimulating all the senses. Smell is one of the most potent triggers to memory. These trigger smells may be easily defined (wood smoke, kerosene, face powder) or they may be a combination that is hard to express in words but creates a context that triggers memories. Sound is also important and may be expressed through music (particularly the sound of instruments being played and recorded music of the period) or more subtly through surfaces (the sound of footsteps on lino) or activities (sound of digging in a garden). Touch is often under stimulated in house museums because of the fragility of the objects. However visitors do like to touch and may do so even if asked not to. Providing objects that visitors can touch safely is a way to help develop those memory triggers that are inspired by touch. Taste can be a powerful memory trigger, and again this sense is often under stimulated in house museums but can be included by offering food appropriate to the period in an on-site café or restaurant, or through special programs that include making or tasting food. Kinetic experience is often overlooked but can be a potent memory trigger. Special programs at house museums often allow for the stimulation of touch, taste and kinetic experience for visitors that may be lacking at other times.

Awareness of the potential of house museums to trigger memories can inform the choice, positioning and use of objects within the rooms. For example, the pianola at Calthorpes' House stimulates memories for many visitors. As an object it has some power to trigger memories but when it is played it provides a range of memory cues that include aural as well as visual triggers. A variety of objects in house museums offer these

opportunities to develop memory triggers for visitors and house museum managers can take this chance to exploit the potential of the collection to further engage visitors.

Authentic housekeeping plays a key role in creating opportunities for visitor memories. By presenting a wealth of authentic objects in appropriate settings the house museum creates a rich layering of memory triggers. Authentic housekeeping develops the multi-sensory experience that is so important to memory through the use of appropriate products that produce the smells, textures and other sensory experiences that may be the key triggers for visitors' memories.

Considering objects and experiences in a house museum as triggers for memories gives them a new dimension. Not only do the objects and experiences tell the story of the house and its people, they are also the triggers for visitors' own stories. In this dual role, these memory triggers become important tools for interpretation that enable a personal engagement with heritage.

*Recommendations for house museum practice:*

Continue to develop the practice of authentic housekeeping with particular awareness of the importance of multi-sensory experiences for visitors.

Consider how authentic housekeeping can be included in the visitors' experience to enhance memory triggers. For example, perhaps the experience of seeing a member of staff performing authentic housekeeping duties would enhance the visit by stimulating memory triggers of seeing similar work performed in the past.

**Interpretation**

Understanding visitors' experiences allows for more effective interpretation. By knowing what the visitor is thinking about, the interpreter has a much better opportunity to tailor the interpretation to the visitor's personal experience and create an opportunity to develop their experience and understanding.

By creating a dialogue between visitor and interpreter both parties will enjoy a more interesting interaction. When visitors share their experiences they are creating an opportunity to develop interpretation based on the interests and personal experiences. Once visitors know that their experiences are valued they are more likely to interact with

the interpreter. If the visitor is part of a group then it is likely that the sharing of memories will encourage other visitors to contribute to the discussion.

Skilled interpreters take a flexible approach to their work and adjust their interpretation to the interests of visitors. As visitors to house museums often come in small groups of family members or friends it is easier to use this style of flexible interpretation and develop a dialogue between the visitor and interpreter. It is much harder to encourage this sort of dialogue with a large group of people. Training interpreters to be alert to visitor reactions and discussions about memories triggered by experience in the house museum will help to facilitate this dialogue.

Finding out what interests visitors and what they already know and then basing the interpretation on this is more interesting for the visitors and more effective for the interpreter. This can be done by asking general questions at the beginning of a tour but it is also effective to listen to the comments visitors make to one another as they progress around the house. Although the interpretation is flexible and responsive, the key messages can still be delivered but they are tailored to the visitor's personal experience through sharing of memories. For example, a reported visitor memory about seeing a grandmother cooking could be developed into part of an interpretation about what food was available, what people produced for themselves, how food was delivered and who did the cooking. Because this interpretation is offered in response to the visitor's memory it is seen as relevant and timely, and therefore likely to engage the visitor's interest.

Visitors to house museums may not immediately experience memories when they enter the house museum, but they are very likely to at some stage in their visit. Interpreters need to be aware that visitors may be taking time to reflect on the past and allow some time for them to do this. A visitor is unlikely to pay attention to the interpreter when they are experiencing memories. By being sensitive to the visitors, an interpreter can allow them time to experience their memories and share them if they choose to.

If the visitor is part of group they will probably share those memories with someone else. By being receptive to those shared memories the interpreter can shape the interpretation around those memories. Once others in the group realise that the shared

memories are valued by a responsive listener, they are more likely to share their memories, and so the interpretation can include these too.

Interpreters can also help to trigger memories by being aware of the multi-sensory nature of triggers. By including opportunities for sound, smell, touch, taste or kinetic experiences interpreters can enhance the occasion for visitors and give them a greater chance of making memory connections. The personal engagement with a heritage site through memory can be used to inform interpretation and provide an experience that is both satisfying for the visitor and effective for the interpreter.

*Recommendations for house museum practice:*

Create a dialogue between interpreter and visitor.

Take a flexible approach to interpretation, following the lead of visitor interest and experience.

Train interpreters to be aware of visitor memory experiences and triggers.

Allow time for visitors to experience and share memories.

Encourage visitors to share memories with one another and the interpreter.

Develop an awareness of multi-sensory memory triggers and include these experiences in the interpretation.

**Publicity**

Some visitors know what to expect because they have either visited the house museum before or others like it. However, many visitors will not have visited the specific house museum before or this may be the first visit to any house museum. There are also large numbers of people who have never considered visiting a house museum.

When visitors were asked about their expectations, many visitors said they did not know what to expect. Publicity is a good opportunity to raise the expectation of memory for visitors. Knowing the period of the house and some of the objects it contains may be enough to raise expectations for some visitors. However, there is the potential to use the memory experience as the key method to publicise the house museum and so move the expectation away from history or objects to experience and personal connection. Through memory, the house museum becomes important to the visitor.

Memory is used successfully in the commercial world as an advertising theme and can be used even more effectively for house museums that contain authentic objects in context. Creating publicity material based on memory may also be a way to reach the current non-visitor. Research has shown that those who are less likely to visit museums (lower income, lower educational levels, and older people) are very interested in family connections to the past. Knowing that a house museum can trigger memories and connections to their family experience may make it more likely that they would visit.

An example of this kind of publicity can be found in the Historic Houses Trust Events guide for March, April and May 2004:

**Grandparents' Day**

This Grandparents' Day, Susannah Place will be 'dressed' to the 1940s. Discover what life was like on the home front during World War II in the Rocks – hear music, try on clothes, eat an Anzac biscuit, play games in the back lane, reminisce in the corner shop.<sup>159</sup>

The publicity suggests that the day will be informal and fun. It connects directly to the interest of family memory by highlighting the lives of grandparents. It appeals to multi-sensory and kinetic experiences, and specifically invites visitors to reminisce.

Understanding visitors' memory experiences and expectations is a key element in targeted publicity which can encourage new visitors to house museums and develop their connections with the site.

*Recommendations for house museum practice:*

Use publicity to raise the memory expectations of potential visitors.

Emphasise the personal connection to the site through memory.

Appeal to the general interest in family history.

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<sup>159</sup> *Events*. Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. March, April and May 2004, p. 15.

## **Enhancing the visitor experience**

House museums can often enhance their visitors' experiences with little extra work or expense. By taking a multi-sensory approach to interpretation there are opportunities to add to existing house museum experiences for visitors.

The use of the pianola at Calthorpes' House is one example. By playing the pianola and singing, staff at Calthorpes' House create a multi-sensory experience for visitors that often triggers memories. This may result in interactions that help to create a good relationship between the interpreter and the visitors near the start of their visit. By lighting the wood stove in the kitchen, staff at Calthorpes' House help to create authentic smells in the house, which often trigger memories for visitors. Using appropriate cleaners and polishes in the house also helps to create an authentic smellscape for visitors. Other house museums may find that they have opportunities to develop similar multi-sensory visitor experiences.

Visitors to Calthorpes' House sometimes find themselves so relaxed by the authentic and welcoming atmosphere that they are tempted to touch objects and open cupboards when this is not appropriate. It would be useful to consider how touch can be incorporated into the visitors' experience, perhaps by creating a room where objects can be handled or offering specific items to touch in other rooms. Other senses, such as taste are already included in special programs where visitors can make and taste foods. These special programs offer excellent opportunities for interpretation based on multi-sensory experiences with small groups.

### *Recommendations for house museum practice:*

Look for opportunities to take a multi-sensory approach to the site.

Develop special programs that allow experiences that are not otherwise available during visits.

## **Conclusion**

From this research, visitors reported that they experienced memories in Calthorpes' House regardless of their age and background. Even people who had never lived in Australia experienced memories in this suburban 1920s house. It may be that memory is

such a universal human experience that it can be triggered by just about any domestic interior. However, memories are more likely to occur when there are many potential triggers for all the senses and the authentic context of the house museum provides a great variety of potential triggers.

Visitors want to connect to house museums and they will often do this through their personal experience. They will look for and find objects and experiences that connect their lives to the places they visit. Because most people visit in small social groups it is likely that they will share their memories. This presents an opportunity to link the interpretation of house museums to visitors' personal experiences through memory and so increase the effectiveness of interpretation and the enjoyment of visitors.

### **Opportunities**

Every house museum can build its memory potential by attention to visitor memory experiences, and this potential also exists at other heritage sites whether they are outdoor sites like the ruins on Maria Island in Tasmania, or indoor museum collections like the Powerhouse in Sydney. Wherever visitors form a personal connection to a heritage site through memory these experiences can be developed for interpretation.

There are also opportunities for house museums to work more closely with those doing reminiscence work and outreach work in communities that do not or can not visit house museums and other heritage places. The collections of house museums and knowledge of their staff are valuable resources that can be used to extend the experience of the history of domestic life into the community through the interplay of personal memory and skilled interpretation.

## Appendices

### **i. Interview questions**

#### Question 1

*Was there anything in the house that reminded you of something in your life?*

#### Question 2

*What was it in the house that made you remember?*

#### Question 3

*What did the (object/smell/experience) make you remember?*

#### Question 4

*Looking back, was there anything else in the house that brought back memories for you?*

#### Question 5

*While you were going around the house did you tell anyone about your memories?*

#### Question 6a, if answer to question 5 is yes

*Who did you tell?*

#### Question 6b

*What did they say?*

#### Question 6c, if the answer to question 5 was no.

*What do you think about those memories?*

#### Question 7

*Do you feel that your memories made any difference to your visit?*

Question 8

*When you decided to visit the house did you expect it help you to remember anything?*

Question 9

*Did you enjoy experiencing the memories?*

Question 10a, if answer to 9 is yes.

*Would the experience of your memories make you want to come back to Calthorpes' House?*

Question 10b

*Would the experience of your memories make you more likely to visit other historic houses?*

Question 10c, if answer to 9 is no.

*Would the experience of those memories stop you returning to Calthorpes' House?*

Question 10d

*Would the experience make you less likely to visit other historic houses?*

## Appendix ii. What caused memory?

### *Most often mentioned*

Copper	13
Kitchen (wood) stove	9
Pianola	7
Furniture	7
Utensils	7
Wood	7
Smell	6
Plate rail	6
Ice chest	5
Kitchen	5
Darkness	5

### *By room*

#### *Laundry*

Copper	13
Laundry	3
Wringer	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

#### *Kitchen*

Stove	9
Utensils	7
Ice chest	5
Kitchen	5
Lino	3
Mixmaster	2
Cleaners	2
Kooka stove	2
Metters stove	2
Tiles	1
Toaster	1
Saucepans	1
Kitchen sink	1
Refrigerator	1
Bread box	1
Groceries/stores	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

#### *Lounge*

Pianola	7
Radio	2
Lamps	1

Copper-topped table	1
Fireplace	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

*Bedroom*

Dressing table	2
Eiderdown	1
Bedroom	1
Quilt	1
Bolster	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

*Child's room*

Other toys	2
Money box	2
School uniform	2
Toy blocks	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

*Bathroom*

Medicines	2
Bathroom	2
Clay pipe	1
Shaving strap	1
Cabinet	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>

*Other*

Furniture	7
Plate rail	6
Things from War	3
Photo	2
Telephone	2
Things from India	1
Food coupons	1
Back room	1
Hall way	1
Pictures	1
Floor covering	1
Sewing machine	1
Cupboards	1
Pull switches	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

### **Appendix iii. Visitor Age**

Year born	
1911-1920	1
1921-1930	1
1931-1940	5
1941-1950	10
1951-1960	10
1961-1970	9
1971-1980	4
Total	40

### **Appendix iv. Ticket sales.**

The ticket sales figures for Calthorpes' House for April and May 2003 when the interviews were carried out were:

April 2003	
Adults	184
Children	152
Family	124
Adult Group	36
Special Programs	23
Free	68
Total tickets	587 plus 338 school visitors

May 2003	
Adults	113
Children	88
Family	48
Adult Group	11
Special Programs	18
Free	104
Total tickets	382 plus 139 school visitors

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