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## A **STUDY GUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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The six episodes of Building Australia explore what the film's press kit calls 'the hidden history of our houses'. In each half-hour episode, presenter John Doyle looks at the nature of a different type of housing style from around the country and asks: Why have we built the way we have? How has Australia shaped the Australian house? And how has the Australian house shaped the lives and culture of Australians?

The job of building Australia is, of course, ongoing, but in six episodes John Doyle charts the journey so far. His perspective privileges the building that matters most to all of us – the home. His observations and his conversations with a range of experts, enthusiasts and home owners around the country offer insight and commentary on how, in building the Australian house, we have both created and been created by a unique set of values, priorities and solutions.

The built landscape of Australia is dominated by houses. How they were built, the materials that were used, the designs and the architectural innovations and influences tell us about our economy and the development of our country. Most of all, they tell us about ourselves; they describe the

history of Australia through the lives of ordinary people. We all influence the homes we occupy and are influenced by them; Amongst many others Building Australia answers these six fascinating questions:

- Why did we import the terrace-house style into colonial society?
- Why do Queenslanders build Queenslanders?
- How did homesteads develop in remote areas?
- Why did weekenders become so popular?
- Where did the Federation style come from?
- Why were project homes so important in post-World War Two Australia?

## BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

House styles have changed in Australia over time.

Opposite are some of the main styles. They are not in the correct chronological order. Place them in what you think is the correct order and identify the name or style of each. You can check your answer on the last page.

The styles and approximate dates of their popularity are:

- Californian Bungalow (1915–1940)
- Colonial Georgian (1788–1850)
- Federation (1901–1920)
- Homestead (1810–1920)
- Late Victorian (1870–1890)
- Modern project home (1950–1960)
- Ocean Liner (1930–1950)
- Post-war (1945–1960)
- Queenslander style (1860–1920)
- Spanish Mission (1920–1940)
- Terrace House (1790–1890)
- Victorian Italianate (1850–1890)

## EXPLORING IDEAS AND ISSUES IN THE FILM

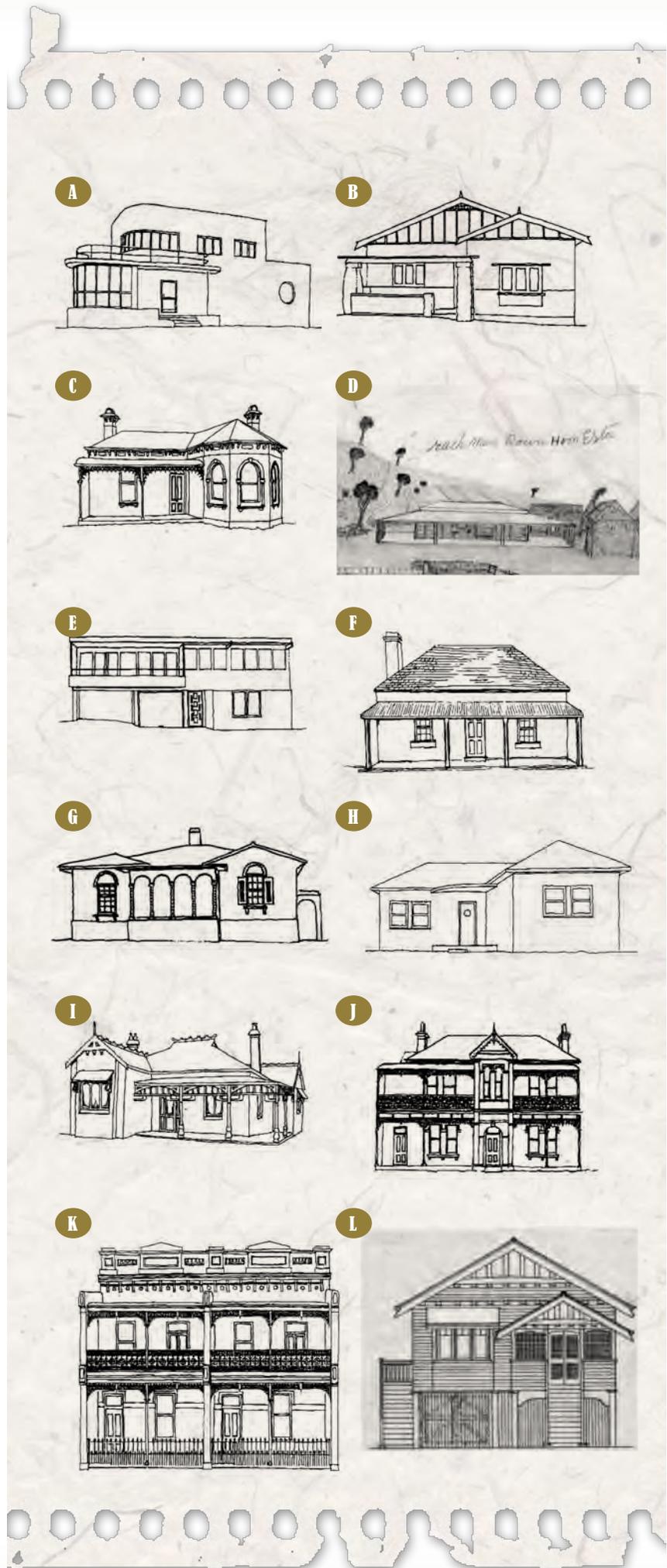
Please see the following pages for activities.

### CURRICULUM APPLICABILITY

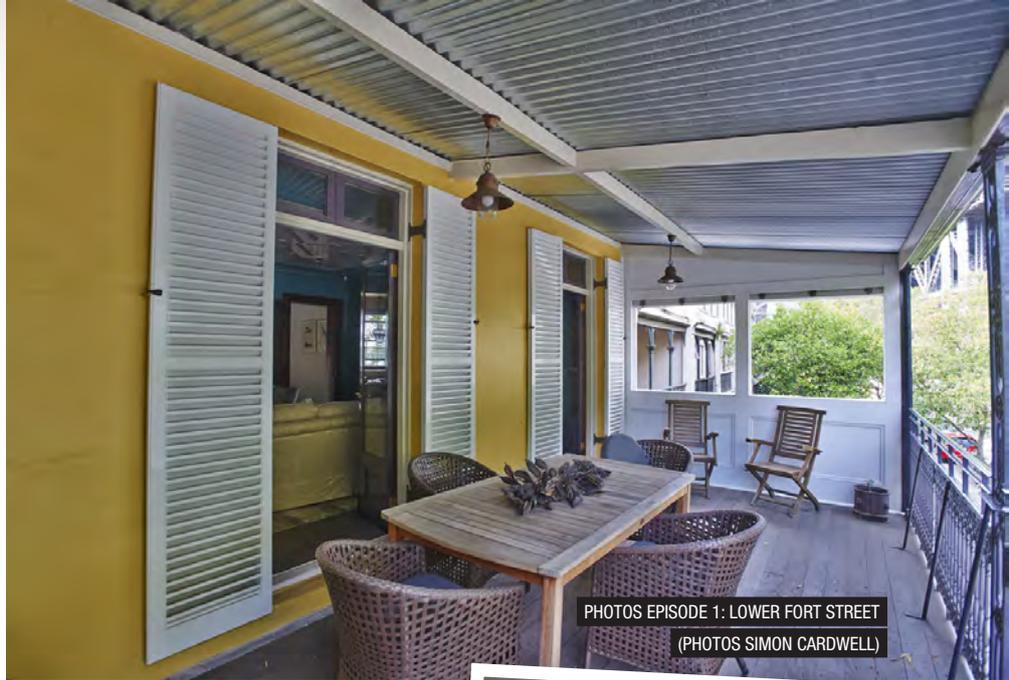
*Building Australia* is a resource that can be used in Australian Curriculum History Years 9 and 10 to explore:

identity;  
environment;  
ideas;  
innovations;  
economy.

It can also be used in Media Studies as a case study of the documentary style.



EPISODE  
**1**



PHOTOS EPISODE 1: LOWER FORT STREET  
(PHOTOS SIMON CARDWELL)

## THE TERRACE

The first episode looks at inner-city living. Beginning with the speculative developments in Lower Fort Street in the Rocks area in Sydney and later moving to Melbourne's neatly organised squares, we trace the earliest development of the terrace from the people who landed with the First Fleet and initiated the tradition of European-style building.

Of course, terrace housing was not limited to the distinctions between Sydney sandstone and Melbourne bluestone; there were humble workers cottages linked in the same way. We note these in the inner cities but also in the once-important mining town of Burra in South Australia, where terrace housing began with dugouts along the banks of the creek.

We learn about the expedience and economy of terrace building that contradicts the status of the inner-city terrace today, as well as the reasons behind the side entrances and rear laneways that gave essential access to so-called utilities prior to mains plumbing. And we discover the unique

characteristics of the Australian terrace, such as the wrought-iron that remains, to this day, the terrace's most conspicuous decorative element.

### 1 Harbour Master's House (Lower Fort Street, Sydney)

- 1.1 When was this terrace built? Why?
- 1.2 Who commissioned this terrace?
- 1.3 Who lived in it?
- 1.4 It is an example of 'speculative building'. What does this mean?
- 1.5 Where did the terrace style come from?
- 1.6 Why was it adopted here?
- 1.7 Why did it not take into account local conditions?

### 2 George Morris' terraces (Lower Fort Street, Sydney)

- 2.1 When were these terraces built?



- 2.2 Who commissioned this building?
- 2.3 Who lived there?
- 2.4 What does this tell us about early colonial society?

### 3 Paddington terrace (Paddington, Sydney)

- 3.1 What are the 'iconic' features of this terrace house?
- 3.2 Who lived there?
- 3.3 How does its past illustrate social change over time?

### 4 Workers' cottages (Birchgrove, Sydney)

- 4.1 Who originally lived in these terraces?
- 4.2 Why were they built so close together?
- 4.3 How did they use space effectively?
- 4.4 Why would they have been popular housing when they were built?





8.2 Who lived there?

8.3 How did they reflect this wealth?

8.4 How does their history illustrate social change over time?

**9 St. Vincent Place (Melbourne)**

9.1 Who lived there?

9.2 How does this terrace contrast with the older Sydney ones?

**Conclusions**

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

1 What do you now understand to be the key features of terrace houses in Australia?

2 What does this episode on terrace houses help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?



company not happy with the Creek Street houses?

6.2 Who lived there?

6.3 How were these houses an improvement for the inhabitants?

**7 Ayers House (Adelaide)**

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

7.1 Who lived there?

7.2 How did he change the terrace house?

7.3 How does this house show social and economic equality in this place and time?

**8 Tasma Terrace (Melbourne)**

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, VICTORIA)

8.1 What led to the building of these terraces in Melbourne?

**5 Creek Street Dugouts (Burra, South Australia)**

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, BURRA BRANCH)

5.1 Why were these houses built here?

5.2 Who lived there?

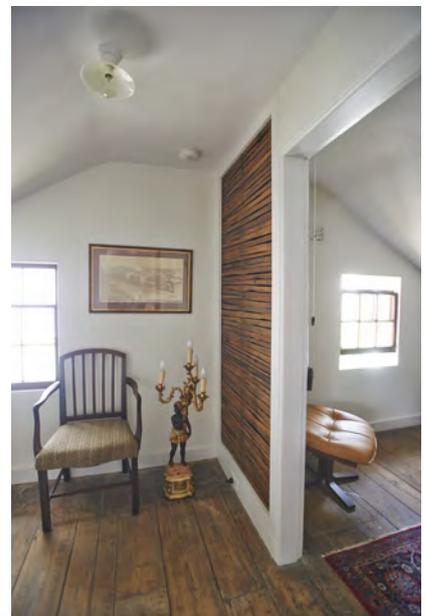
5.3 Why were these houses built in this way?

5.4 How do they show inequality in Australian society?

**6 Paxton Square Cottages (Burra, South Australia)**

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, BURRA BRANCH)

6.1 Why was the Burra mining



# EPISODE 1

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values

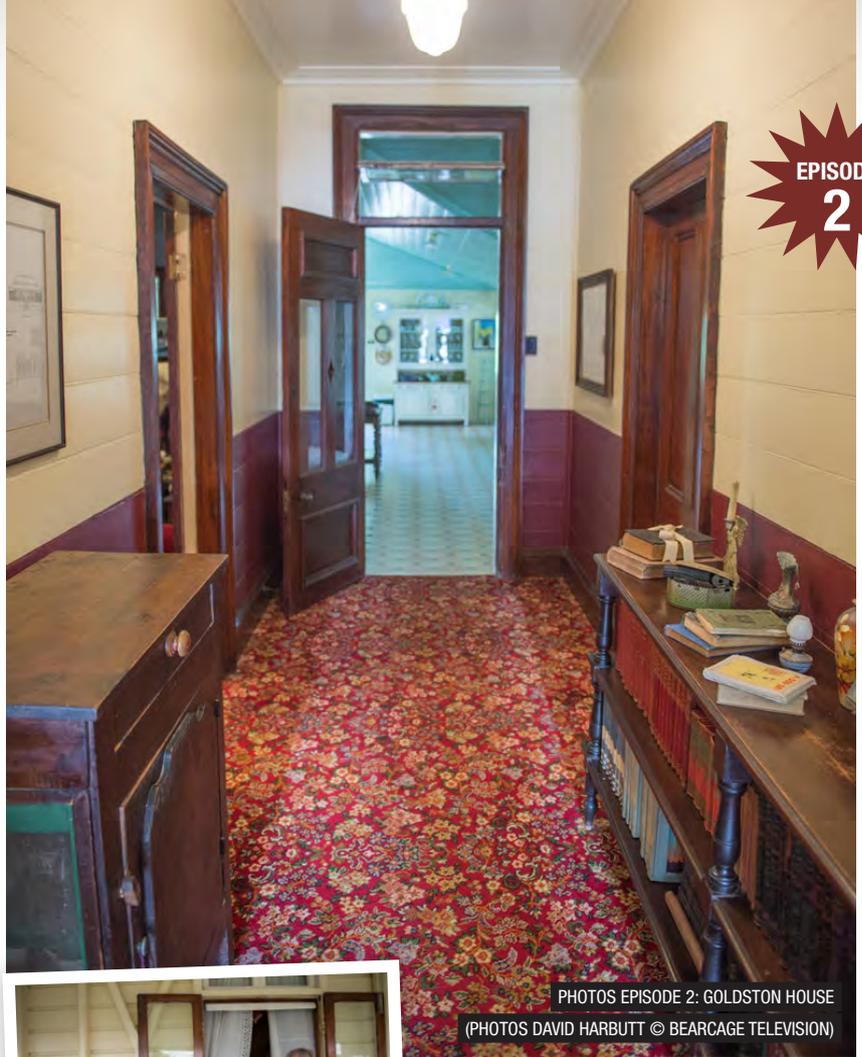


Health



Community





EPISODE  
2

PHOTOS EPISODE 2: GOLDSTON HOUSE

(PHOTOS DAVID HARBUTT © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)



## THE QUEENSLANDER

From the inner city, we move to consider how Australians have adapted to a climate with which most were initially unfamiliar.

Archive journals reveal how unprepared the pioneers were for the tropics. So, from a suburban Brisbane residence to a Bundaberg sugar plantation, and from a Rockhampton

railway house to a literally itinerant dwelling in Longreach, this episode explores the gradual adaptation to life in the tropics and the evolution of one of Australia's most iconic houses.

We survey the conflicting reasons

given for raising the house above the ground – was it air circulation, flood mitigation, or simply expediency? We cover the depredations of the white ant and the various solutions that were thrown at that ongoing problem. Finally, we move to the Top End to examine the introduction of an Asian influence on Australian housing, one that has survived the bombings of World War Two, the devastation of Cyclone Tracy and the assaults of property developers.



### 1 Rangemoor (Brisbane)

- 1.1 What is a 'Queenslander'?
- 1.2 When was this house built?
- 1.3 What are the main materials used in building a Queenslander?
- 1.4 What are the three key features of the Queenslander in response to the environment?
- 1.5 What elements are innovative?
- 1.6 Who lived there?



## 2 Langenbaker House (Ilfracombe, Queensland)

- 2.1 Who lived there?
- 2.2 Why was timber an important element in Queensland homes?
- 2.3 Why is a Queensland so easily able to be transported?
- 2.4 Why did this make them valuable in Queensland's economy?

## 3 Fairymead House (Bundaberg, Queensland)

- 3.1 Who lived there?
- 3.2 Where did ideas for this house come from?
- 3.3 How does this house suit the climate and environment?

- 3.4 How does it not suit them?
- 3.5 Why were fireplaces included?
- 3.6 How does this house reflect sugar plantation society?

## 4 Goldston House (Rockhampton, Queensland)

- 4.1 Who lived there?
- 4.2 Why was this house built here?
- 4.3 How was it innovative?
- 4.4 How does it suit the climate and environment?



## 5 Burnett House (Darwin)

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, NORTHERN TERRITORY)

- 5.1 Who lived there?
- 5.2 How does this house reflect the typical features of a Queensland?
- 5.3 What other influences are found in it?
- 5.4 How does the humidity of Darwin influence the way people live in this Queensland?
- 5.5 What other innovations did this house have?

## Conclusions

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

- 1 What do you now understand to be the key features of Queensland houses in Australia?
- 2 What does this episode on Queensland houses help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?

## EPISODE 2

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values



Health



Community





PHOTOS THIS PAGE: CAMDEN PARK HOUSE  
(PHOTOS SIMON CARDWELL © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)

EPISODE  
**3**

## THE HOMESTEAD

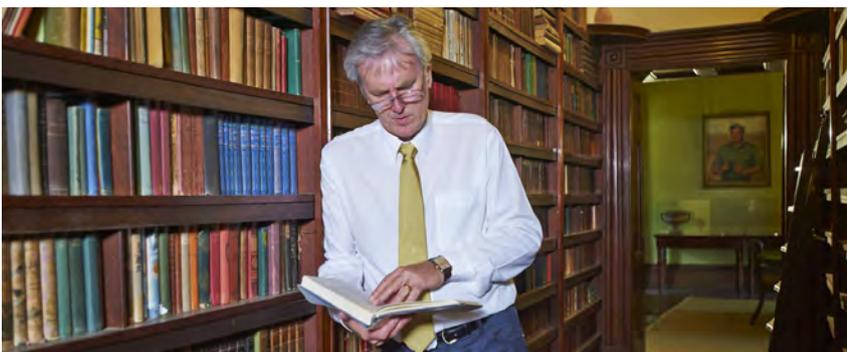
The third episode investigates the style of probably the most romantic form of Australian house. As we learn from Camden Park (a grand house built in the Palladian style), the initial impulse was to build ‘country homes’ that replicated the fashions and the assertions of a class system derived from England. But, as we see at Lanyon Homestead, it was not long before the design principles of the Australian homestead started to emerge.

The homestead is unique among Australian houses as it is inextricably tied to the workplace. Central to a working property homesteads are, traditionally, expected to pass through the generations; Camden Park is still in the hands of the descendants of those who commissioned it in 1831. Woolmers in Tasmania has a similarly long association with its founding family and is a rich repository of stories about how houses were built, staffed and managed with assigned convict labour.



From a contrasting homestead in north Queensland, which gives us an insight into how a forward-looking family brought their house – and the farm – with them into the twentieth century, we go to our last stop, which brings us to perhaps the most iconic

image of a homestead. Located in the isolated Western Australian Wheatbelt, this homestead remains just as remote today and tells us stories of pioneering in harsh conditions and making a home that had to offer hospitality to travellers as well as family.

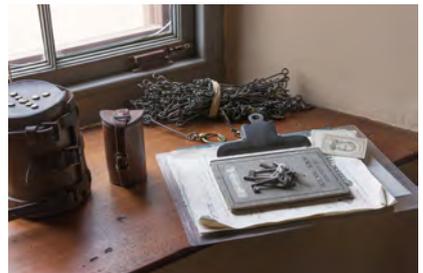


### 1 Camden Park (Camden South, NSW)

- 1.1 Who lived there?
- 1.2 How were local materials used?
- 1.3 What was it modelled on? Why?
- 1.4 How was it innovative?



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: LANYON HOMESTEAD  
(PHOTOS IRENE DOWDY © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)



## 2 Lanyon Homestead (ACT)

2.1 When was this homestead built?

2.2 Who lived there?

2.3 How did it use local materials?  
Why?

2.4 How did the homestead adapt to local conditions?

2.5 How does it show social differences or distinctions within the community there?



## 3 Woolmers Estate (Longford, TAS)

3.1 When was this homestead created?

3.2 Who lived there?

3.3 How did it use the convict system to help create and run it?

3.4 How does it show social differences or distinctions within the community there?

3.5 What does it show about gender in colonial society?

## 4 Greenmount Homestead (Mackay, Queensland)

4.1 When was this homestead built?

4.2 Who lived there?

4.3 How did it adapt to the climate and environment?

4.4 How does it challenge the usual image of 'White Australia'?

4.5 How does it show the role of gender in society at this time?

## 5 Mangowine Homestead (Nungarin, WA)

(NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, WA)

5.1 When was this homestead built?  
Why?

5.2 Who lived there?

5.3 How did it use local materials?

5.4 How was it influenced by changes to the local economy?

5.5 What does it tell us about isolation in Australia?

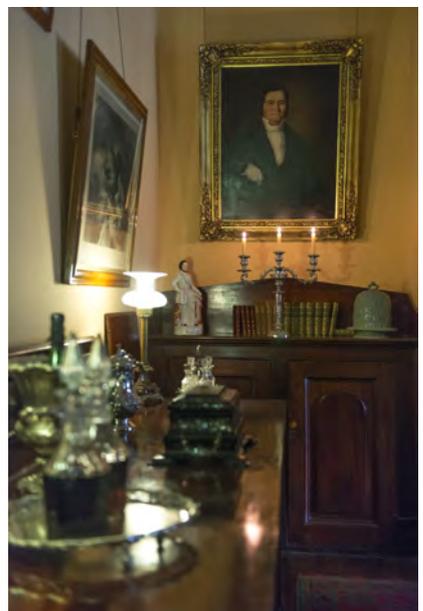


## Conclusions

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

1 What do you now understand to be the key features of homesteads in Australia?

2 What does this episode on homesteads help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?



## EPISODE 3

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values



Health



Community





## THE WEEKENDER

Up until now, we have looked at houses that were permanent residences. But, as the labour movement agitated for fair working conditions – including paid holidays and the five-day week – leisure was on people’s minds. The fourth episode tells the story of what many did with their leisure – they built and, when they could, retreated to weekenders.

From the tradition of bush carpentry seen in Brayshaw’s Hut (a turn-of-the-century grazier’s lodgings in the alpine area of Namadgi National Park), we see the weekender’s make-do origins and its development as weekenders were established to service the alpine leisure pursuits that later caught on around Mount Kosciuszko.

There is, of course, fibro on the beach and kit homes made from recycled materials, but the weekender is also the story of ‘the shack on wheels’, as better cars and better roads saw the rise of caravanning in Australia. As times got tougher and building regulations got stricter, the golden age of the shack passed, but for many the indelible memories of time spent in the weekend getaway are as formative as any other memories of ‘home’.



EPISODE  
4



PHOTOS EPISODE 4: NAVAL BASE HOLIDAY SHACK  
(PHOTOS BOHDAN WARCHOMIJ © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)

### 1 Brayshaw’s Hut (Namadgi National Park, ACT)

- 1.1 When was this hut built?
- 1.2 Who lived there?
- 1.3 How did it use local materials?
- 1.4 Why were so few other materials used?
- 1.5 Who would have used this place? Why?



### 2 Naval Base Shacks (Henderson, outskirts of Perth)

- 2.1 When was this place established? Why?
- 2.2 Who lived there?
- 2.3 Why has it survived?
- 2.4 How has the local environment changed?



### 3 Currawong Workers' Cottages (Currawong Beach, NSW)

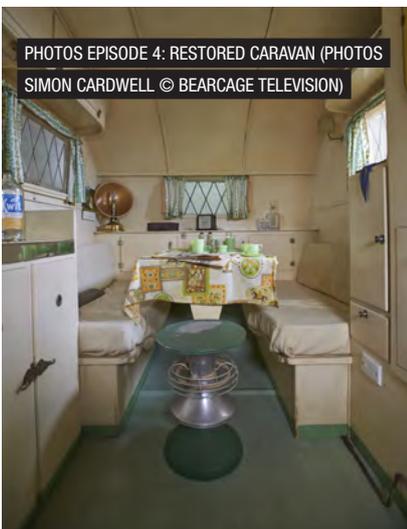
- 3.1 When was this place built? Why?
- 3.2 Who lived there?
- 3.3 What social conditions made it possible?

### 4 Orcades (Patonga, NSW)

- 4.1 When was this place built? Why?
- 4.2 Who lived there?
- 4.3 How does it show the use of a new type of building material?
- 4.4 What social conditions made it possible?

### 5 Keebles Hut (Kosciuszko National Park, NSW)

- 5.1 When was this place built? Why?
- 5.2 Who lived there?
- 5.3 How did it use local materials?



- 5.4 Why were so few other materials used?
- 5.5 What social conditions made it possible?

### 6 Caravans

- 6.1 When did the caravan start to be built in Australia? Why?



- 6.2 Who lived in them?
- 6.3 How did they show the use of a new type of building material?
- 6.5 What social conditions made them more popular?
- 6.6 What social conditions are influencing the development of caravan parks?

### Conclusions

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

- 1 What do you now understand to be the key features of weekenders in Australia?
- 2 What does this episode on weekenders help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?

## EPISODE 4

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values



Health



Community





EPISODE  
5



PHOTOS EPISODE 5: CHADWICK HOUSE  
(PHOTOS BILL GREEN © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)

## THE FEDERATION HOUSE

Alfred Deakin was Australia's second prime minister and is often called the 'Father of Federation'. His bungalow, 'Balllara', tells the story of the optimism and confidence that powered the movement to make Australia an independent nation. This national idealism was reflected in the assured, even showy architecture of the Federation house.

The Federation style created a fusion of many genres, such as Arts & Crafts, Queen Anne and Spanish Mission, which coloured the landscape of urban Australia as it spread – with

affluence and the growth of population – into the suburbs. Once reserved for the wealthy, wishing to escape the bustle of the city (as represented in the ostentatious Chadwick House in

Victoria's Eaglemont), the suburbs were opening up to the working class.

In Australia's first planned suburb, Dacey Gardens in New South Wales, we visit the modest Federation Californian Bungalows built to house returning servicemen after World War One. Here, Federation can be seen as a style that took from different movements around the world and turned them into something unique and uniquely Australian.





the idea of Australia as an egalitarian nation?

### 5 Belvedere (Cremorne, NSW)

5.1 When was this house built?

5.2 Who lived there?

5.3 What were its main features?

5.4 How was the bungalow a response to the new way of living in the post-war era, where servants were scarce and expensive?

### 6 The Fishwick House (Castlecrag, NSW)

6.1 When was this house built?

6.2 Who built it?

6.3 Who lived there?

6.4 What are its main features?

6.5 Does this settlement challenge the idea of Australia as an egalitarian nation?

### Conclusions

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

1 What do you now understand to be the key features of Federation houses in Australia?

2 What does this episode on Federation houses help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?

### 1 Ballara, Alfred Deakin's holiday house (Point Lonsdale, VIC)

1.1 When was this house built?

1.2 Who lived there?

1.3 What were the main new features of this style of house?

1.4 How did the house reflect the personality of the owners?

### 2 Chadwick House (Eaglemont, VIC)

2.1 When was this house built?

2.2 Who lived there?

2.3 How does this house reflect the main features of the Federation house?

### 3 Appian Way (Burwood, Sydney)

3.1 When was this estate built?

3.2 What does it tell us about the ideal of suburban life in Australia?

3.3 Who was supposed to live here?

3.4 Does this settlement challenge the idea of Australia as an egalitarian nation?

### 4 Daceyville (Sydney)

4.1 When was this estate built?

4.2 What does it tell us about the ideal of suburban life in Australia?

4.3 Who was supposed to live here?

4.4 Does this settlement challenge

## EPISODE 5

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values



Health



Community



EPISODE  
6



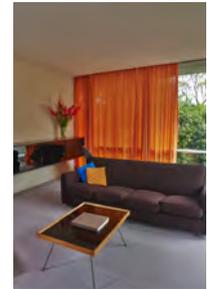
PHOTOS THIS PAGE: ROSE SEIDLER HOUSE  
(PHOTOS SIMON CARDWELL © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)

## THE PROJECT HOUSE

While houses from the decommissioned air force base in Tocumwal, New South Wales – delivered via truck to Canberra – went some way toward addressing the housing crisis in our nation’s capital, with post-war immigration and the baby boom the rest of Australia needed some 400,000 new homes.

The final episode of Building Australia tells the story of how factory-built houses and project homes met this immense demand for housing and, to a degree, reflected both the taste for ‘modernity’ and the preferences of the ‘New Australians’ who moved into the spreading suburbs.

From the once-revolutionary display village of Kingsdene Estate in Carlingford, to Ken Woolley’s Lowlines,



to the Beachcombers of Nino Sydney (himself a post-war immigrant), this is the story of how Australia managed to house us all. It is the story of the twenty-five years that were most influential in shaping the Australia we live in today.

### 1 Tocumwal Houses (Canberra, ACT)

1.1 What were the problems facing housing after the Second World War?

1.2 What were the key features of this style of house?

1.3 How did they help solve these problems?

1.4 Who lived in them?

### 2 Rose Seidler House (Wahroonga, NSW)

2.1 When was this house built?

2.2 Who lived there?

2.3 How was it revolutionary?

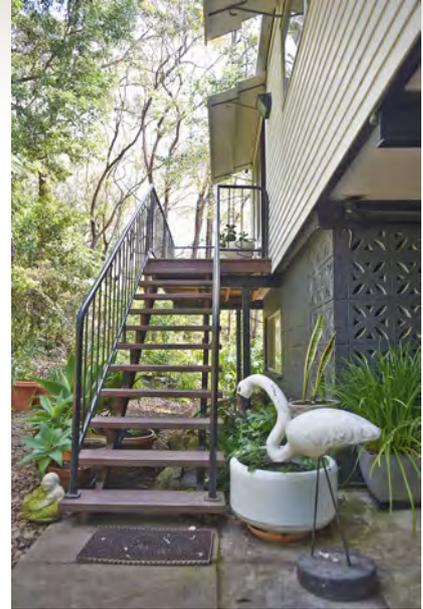
2.4 Why is it a significant house?

### 3 Manning Clark House (Canberra, ACT)

3.1 Who lived there?

3.2 What is the significance of this house?





PHOTOS THIS PAGE: BEACHCOMBER  
 (PHOTOS SIMON CARDWELL © BEARCAGE TELEVISION)



## Conclusions

The presenter claims that the story of Australian houses 'tells us who we were and who we are'.

1 What do you now understand to be the key features of project houses in Australia?

2 What does this episode on project houses help us understand about the following aspects of Australian colonial society and history?



## 5 Beachcomber (Blue Mountains, NSW)

5.1 What were the main features of this house?

5.2 Who lived there?

5.3 How was it significant?

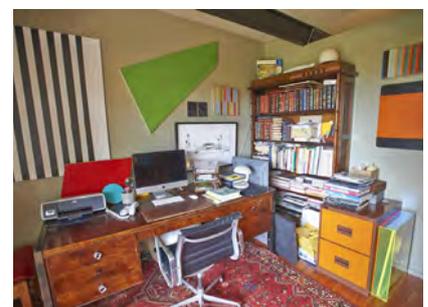
3.3 What are its main features?

## 4 Kingsdene Estate (Carlingford, NSW)

4.1 What was the significance of this estate?

4.2 Who lived there?

4.3 What does this settlement tell us about the idea of Australia as an egalitarian nation?



## EPISODE 6

Social equality  
or inequality



Aspects of  
the economy



The  
environment



Cultural  
borrowing



Cultural  
innovation



Attitudes  
and values



Health



Community



## FILM STUDY

### Is *Building Australia* a good documentary?

A documentary film uses a variety of elements and strategies to have an impact.

1. Why have the filmmakers called this series a “hidden” history?
2. Consider the way the following elements are used in *Building Australia*. Use your own viewing of the film and the interviews that follow to summarise your ideas.
3. Look at this trailer for *Building Australia*:  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRNo8-TTQao>>  
OR  
<<http://www.carlyheaton.com/building-australia-launch-trailer-technical-ecstasy/>>  
Comment on its features or characteristics, and how you think it was made.  
Now read this explanation:  
<<http://www.picturedrift.com.au/project/building-australia/>>



#### THE HOUSE STYLES ARE:

- |                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A Ocean Liner (1930–1950)          | G Spanish Mission (1920–1940)    |
| B Californian Bungalow (1915–1940) | H Post-war (1945–1960)           |
| C Victorian Italianate (1850–1890) | I Federation (1901–1920)         |
| D Homestead (1810–1920)            | J Late Victorian (1870–1890)     |
| E Modern project home (1950–1960)  | K Terrace House (1790–1890)      |
| F Colonial Georgian (1788–1850)    | L Queenslander style (1860–1920) |

## OTHER RESOURCES

Building Australia History Channel website  
<<http://buildingaustralia.historychannel.com.au>>

How do I trace the history of my house?

<<http://www.nla.gov.au/infoserv/faq/index.php?lang=en&action=artikel&cat=10&id=36918&rtl=1>>

Australian residential architectural styles

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_residential\\_architectural\\_styles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_residential_architectural_styles)>

House, home and history

<<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/australian-architecture-houses.htm>>

Our house: histories of Australian homes

<<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications/commission/books/ourhouse/intro.html>>



ASPECT	COMMENTS
Structure of the film	
Narration and script	
The role of the narrator	
Music	
Historic still and moving images	
Dramatic reconstructions	
Editing	
Sound	
Cinematography	
Special effects	
Interviews	
Use of colour, and of black and white	
Any other features that you notice	



PURCHASE OF DVDS:  
RONIN FILMS  
P.O. Box 680  
Mitchell, ACT 2911  
AUSTRALIA

PH: 02 6248 0851  
FAX: 02 6249 1640  
WEB: <http://www.roninfilms.com.au>  
EMAIL: [orders@roninfilms.com.au](mailto:orders@roninfilms.com.au)



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