

Research Design

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2022-05-30

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Introduction

The question explored through this portfolio is:

What is the contribution of research in the digital humanities to the production and dissemination of public ‘stories’ or interpretations about aspects of local community history and cultural heritage? Drawing on a series of related case studies, illustrate how these tools and methods can aid historical scholarship.

A series of related case studies relating to heritage in the historic town of Kempton, Tasmania has been used to illustrate tools and methods in Digital Humanities.

Background

The town of Kempton is located approximately fifty kilometres north of Hobart, on the Midland Highway in the Local Government Area of Southern Midlands (as shown on Figure 1). It was first settled by Europeans in 1820, and was known as Green Ponds, then Kemp Town, until 1866 when the name was officially gazetted as Kempton after Anthony Kemp, the first landholder in the area (“Placenames Tasmania,” n.d.).

Anthony Kemp was granted land at Green Ponds in 1816, and in the following years other settlers took up land grants for farming. The township developed, including several inns and churches.

In 1828 the Green Ponds Probation Station was established, located on the Green Ponds glebe, and housed many convict road parties working on building the road between Hobart and Launceston. The Probation station was closed in 1841, and following this, the land associated with the glebe was sold. Subsequently, many buildings were constructed in the 1840s (“History,” n.d.). These buildings were built in classic Georgian style, and form an important part of the heritage of the town of Kempton.

The local government area of Southern Midlands has a number of towns with historic buildings and heritage areas, including Oatlands, Kempton, Colebrook and Jericho (“Southern Midlands Council | A Rural Local Government Authority Located in Tasmania Australia,” n.d.). Oatlands is a major historical centre, with a large collection of Georgian sandstone buildings, the iconic Callington Mill and tends to draw the focus for heritage and historical projects in the region, as evident on the council website where five of the major heritage projects listed are at Oatlands (“Heritage Highway,” n.d.) .

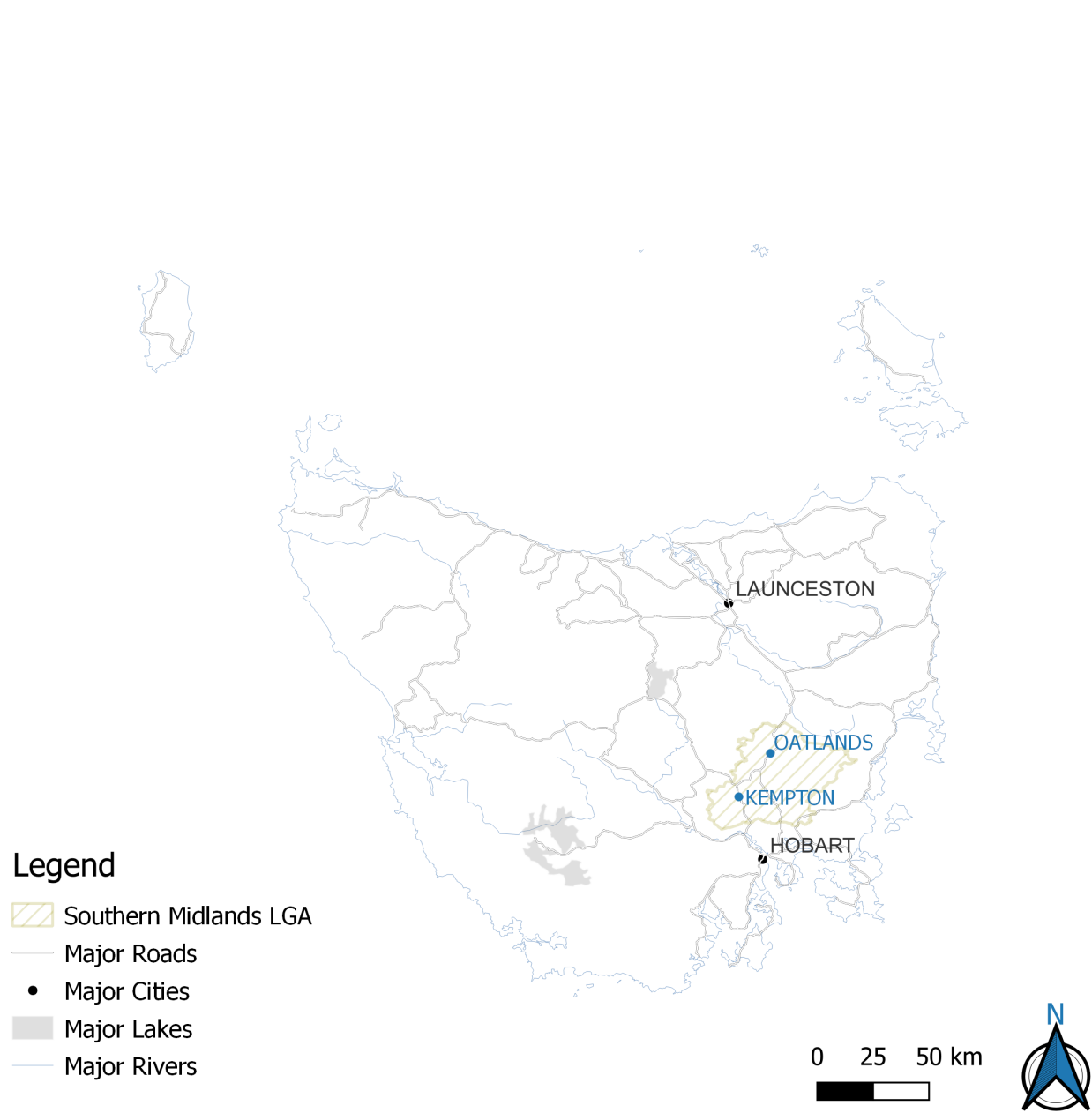


Figure 1: Map of Tasmania showing the location of Kempton and Oatlands

Heritage projects relating to Kempton recently undertaken include:

- The restoration of the Kempton Watch House, which is the remains of the original probation station, and now part of the council offices (“Kempton Watch House,” n.d.).



Figure 2: Kempton Watch House

- A ‘Re-living the Past’ festival in 2009 focusing on the horse-drawn heritage of Kempton as a coaching village - with two building linked to early coach services between Hobart and Launceston (“Horse Drawn Heritage,” n.d.).
- ‘Shadows of the Past’ on the Heritage Highway - there are sixteen large metal silhouettes located on the highway between Kempton and Tunbridge forming a sculpture trail (“Shadows of the Past,” n.d.). The four sculptures close to or in Kempton all relate to horse drawn coaches.



Figure 3: Silhouette sculpture

Community groups of relevance to this project are the Green Ponds Progress Association, whose aim is to raise the profile and opportunities within Kempton and the Green Ponds District (“Green Ponds Progress Association,” n.d.) and the Oatlands Community Association (“Oatlands Community Association,” n.d.).

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this project is founded on the principles of reproducible research and FAIR data which are further discussed (in the discussion and conclusions section).

The major approaches used to complete the portfolio tasks are briefly discussed in the following sections.

Task 1 - Harvesting Data From the Web

This task uses the Tasmanian Land Records (1832-1935) dataset filtered to only include records from Kempton. Images of the historic deeds were downloaded, via a URL in the dataset, from the Tasmanian Names Index which is held and maintained at Libraries Tasmania. Additional data was transcribed and added to the task dataset. The data collated for this task can be used as a foundation for further examination of ownership of land in the Kempton townsite since the 1840s.

Task 2 - Historical Image Analysis

This task curates a digital repository of publicly available audio-visual data relevant to Kempton. The focus for this task was a series of historical photos and paintings of Kempton and comparing more recent photographs with a view to assessing the preservation of heritage.

Task 3 - Thematic Coding

This task involved the application of a qualitative coding methodology on unstructured text. The focus for this task was the Historic Heritage Strategy Reports from the Southern Midlands council. Two reports were analysed, one for the period 2013-2018 and one for the period 2019-2023.

Task 4 - Mapping the Data

The aim of this task was to produce a map of the locality that this assignment focuses on, with optional additional tasks. The map at Figure 1 on this page was produced in this task, as well as an interactive map of heritage sites in Kempton, and an overlay of xx map on the current town layout.

References

- “Green Ponds Progress Association.” n.d. <https://www.greenpondsprogress.com>.
- “Heritage Highway.” n.d. <https://hobartandbeyond.com.au/places/heritage-highway/>.
- “History.” n.d. <https://www.greenpondsprogress.com/history>.
- “Horse Drawn Heritage.” n.d. <https://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/horse-drawn-heritage/>.
- “Kempton Watch House.” n.d. <https://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/kempton-watch-house/>.
- “Oatlands Community Association.” n.d. <https://oatlandscommunity.org.au/>.
- “Placenames Tasmania.” n.d. <https://www.placenames.tas.gov.au/#p1>.
- “Shadows of the Past.” n.d. <https://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/shadows-of-the-past/>.
- “Southern Midlands Council | A Rural Local Government Authority Located in Tasmania Australia.” n.d. <https://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/>.