5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

5.1 Introduction

The archaeological investigation of present extent of the Erowal Farm property took place between Wednesday, 3 March and Sunday, 8 March 1999. See item 1.4 for the methodology regarding the survey for European and Aboriginal archaeological remains. Part of Friday, 5 March was devoted to speaking to people with knowledge of the area and research in the Nowra Library and at the Shoalhaven City Council.

Compass directions, north, south, east and west, used in this report are ‘conventional’ for convenience, conventional north being in the direction of boundary along The Wool Road.

The archaeological remains may have been missed in the past because of the heavy grass and weed growth over the site. Some of the weed growth and grass had to be cut away over the remains so that a proper assessment could be made, although some areas were too thickly overgrown and interlaced with Stinging Nettle and Brambles to clear successfully.

5.2 Summary

The area examined is as described under item 1.3. The area represents the core area of Erowal Farm as developed from 1830, that is, where the house, huts and outbuildings were built and the first land was cleared. The bulk of the land, particularly the central ridge was cleared, farmed and used for grazing from 1830 to about 1898, some of the sides of the ridge to the east and west later reverted to native forest and the rest of the ridge became covered in dense grassland.

The clearing, farming and grazing of the area identified above would have destroyed any Aboriginal sites but no traces of even disturbed sites or tool, shell or charcoal scatters were found anywhere. The property has no tradition or history of Aboriginal use.

The areas of the most significant European archaeological remains are concentrated on the highest point and to the north side of the knoll of the central ridge:

1. Remnants of structures and building materials dating to the 1830s and 1840s and later were found on and around the site of the old farm house.

The concrete re-flooring of the house, kitchen and various outbuildings now dominate the site but preserve the archaeological deposits below and provide a good indicator of the extent of the various structures.

2. A surprising number of remnant plantings, mainly trees, survive from the 1800s. The triple topped Norfolk Pine, for instance, would have to be at least 130 years
3. The other site feature of high significance is the extensive and spectacular stone foundation ruins of the circa 1920 planned resort, or guesthouse, to the north of the farm house footings. The cement slabs were an afterthought and date a few years later than the stone foundations.

4. Of minor significance is a dump scatter of domestic material dating to the 1930s and the early 1940s. A closer examination of the material may extend the date range to the 1920s. The dump scatter is located in a branch of a dry creek bed to the north-east of the farmhouse and resort site in an area of native forest regrowth.

LIST OF INDIVIDUAL SITES

5.3 Erowal Farm House Site

The present Erowal Farm house site is largely obscured by rank Kikuyu grass growth and piles of demolition rubble but the outline could be traced when the south and east edges of the verandah and the front steps were located. The front stone steps were found by estimating the mid point of the row of four historic camellias along the south side of the house. The front steps provide us with the mid point and hence the central hallway and back door of the house. Typical of colonial period houses, the layout was based on a central hallway, confirmed in this case by photographs of the house and a rough sketch plan (Bryces and Erowal Estate by Liam Allen, 20 Oct 1996).

Although there were few of the original construction period walls to be seen above ground level, the remnants of the west wall of double brick construction (actually the thickness of the length of one brick) were traced. The remnants of a dividing wall of double brick, originally the wall dividing the two ground floor west rooms, was found and could be lined up with a wall dividing what was once the east verandah.

The thick wall dividing the east verandah was of a later phase, being constructed of rubble stone, recycled brick and a hard portland type cement. Parts of the east wall also survives above floor level. The east wall was also rebuilt at a later stage being mainly composed of brick rubble set in hard portland cement. The rounded internal corner at the south end of the wall indicates that a doorway was constructed giving access onto the east verandah. The walls were rendered with hard portland cement and scribed, while the cement was wet, to imitate stone ashlar construction (- imitation stone blocks, as was popular during the nineteenth century). However, historical indications are that this work took place sometime between 1908 and 1920, after Keen purchased the property from the Bryces, probably in connection with plans of running a guesthouse. Building materials, such as early brick and wall plaster, demolished to make way for the new work, was incorporated into the new walls.

It was during this latter period that the verandah and internal floors were covered in
View of Erowal Farm house which would have shown the south elevation (front). The four Camellias and Norfolk Pine are shown in photographs of the 1890s. The two English Oaks to the far right may be the oldest of the remnant plantings.

The front steps (south elevation of Erowal Farm house) were covered with Kikuyu grass. The steps were found by estimating a mid distance between the row of Camellias. The steps mark the mid point of the house, hence the position of the central hallway can be estimated. The house floors were covered in concrete.
(Mrs. Berry Bryce Collection)

What appears to be a Bunya Pine.

Note the Norfolk Pine next to South elevation, 1890s

EROWAL FARM
a thick layer of cement and/or concrete. Except for the external and internal walls mentioned above, there was little indication of what happened to the other walls in the cement floors. It may have been that walls were removed to enlarge the living area, extending into the south verandah area: that could explain the reinforcement of the east wall.

Much of the surface was obscured by the rank Kikuyu grass and the piles of rubble.

The rubble piles over the house site represent what was left after all useful building materials, such as brick, were removed from the site after the house was burned down. The typical indication of a site that has been demolished for useful materials after a fire is that materials such as roofing iron is found under the rubble instead of on top of it: that was the case on this site and also in the kitchen area.

The rubble piles must be regarded as part of the archaeological resource of the site as it contains evidence of the composition of the superstructure of the house. Even demolished materials from the 1908-1920 refurbishment should be regarded as an archaeological resource as it incorporates material from the original structure. One piece of early wall plaster was found embedded in the cement work showing floating and finishing coats of plaster and several layers of paint or whitewash - small pieces of evidence like that can provide information about wall surfaces in the house and even of colour schemes.

Evidently the footings of the verandah, as seen at the south and east elevations, were not radically altered at any time, being constructed of a mixture of sandstone and a sort of basalt in rubble stone construction. The stone was not obviously dressed. The use of basalt is interesting as it does not occur on the property to my knowledge. Mainly basalt was used in the construction of the early chimney stack, or fireplace, of the kitchen. The stone may have been brought in via St Georges Basin, as Lamb had shipping interests at the time the farm was established.

The earliest mortar found on the site was made of shell mortar and quartz based sand. Shell lime mortar generally ceased to be used after the 1840s or in some cases the early 1850s.

Conclusion

Judging by the early building remains of the house that was burned down in the late 1940s, the house was built before the 1850s. The lack of Lamb’s direct involvement after he had established the farm in 1830 or very soon after makes it unlikely that the house was built after the early 1830s, during Lamb’s ownership, just for the accommodation of an overseer or superintendent. Hence it is concluded that the house was built in 1830 or very soon after.

There is photographic evidence that the house received a revamp during the 1850s or 1860s judging by the details of the chimney stacks and pots.

There is still the chance that there was a temporary house or hut built in 1830. Detailed archaeological work awaits for some time in the future to answer such
Fragment of a rebuilt section of an Erowal Farm house wall, dating between 1908 and the early 1920s. Most of the bricks are from the original construction period but re-used and bonded with a hard portland cement mix. The wall surface was rendered, smoothed and ruled (scribed) in imitation of ashlar stone blocks. The brick fragment on the top shows traces of shell lime mortar.

Part of a concrete wall from Erowal Farm house incorporating building materials from demolished sections of the original house. The rubble above the concrete floors are an important part of the archaeological resource. Shown here is a fragment of shell lime plaster with floating and finishing coats and evidence of paint schemes used incorporated in the 1908 to early 1920s concrete.
questions, that is why the site must be sympathetically conserved during the proposed development works.

5.4 Kitchen Outbuilding.

The kitchen was located in a separate building as it was not unusual for a kitchen to catch fire during colonial times. This is a feature found on many old properties in Australia. The kitchen in this case was built at the back of the house, on the north side.

The outline of the original building can be traced by following the edge of the concrete slabs around what appears to be a tall stack of stones. The latter feature was the large fireplace of the kitchen.

The fireplace was composed of a type of granite also seen along the verandah footings of the house, some sandstone was also used in the construction. The fireplace is the earliest feature seen above ground on the site. The mortar used to bind the rubble stone construction was made of unsieved shell lime mortar, large pieces of shell may be spotted among the crumbling stonework. The fireplace escaped extensive plundering after the house was burned down but was considerably damaged judging by the rubble below and around it. The mouth of the fireplace is completely obscured.

The original kitchen building was made of timber, the outline of the structure is seen in a depression by the extent of the cement/concrete slabs.

The slabs seem to suggest that the structure was added to from time to time, creating a rambling structure, as seen on the sketch plans made on site. Parts of the kitchen and roofs may be seen in some of the Bryce period photographs (ref Mrs Berly Bryce Collection).

5.5 Early Farm Outbuildings

Originally there would have been huts for the various farm staff. The main house was for the free superintendent (and family) employed by Lieut John Lamb and for when Lamb visited the property. There would have been a hut for the next in charge, the convict servant (Elliott by 1836). There were also huts or a large hut for the convicts assigned to clear and work the land and tend cattle for Lamb.

There would also have been at least one barn or large shed for the storage of farm produce.

5.6 Farm Buildings

Two of the Bryce photographs show a number of timber sheds behind the house. These seem to be near the kitchen and sites of these may in part be
Right: Section of an Erowal Farm house brick wall over which a thicker wall was constructed of concrete around 1908 to early 1920s. The wall was demolished for building materials sometime after the house burned down (late 1940s). The bricks appear to be from the original construction period.

Below: Kitchen fireplace constructed of a basalt stone and shell lime mortar. Large pieces of burned shell may be seen in the rubble. The stonework dates to the 1830s (or 1840s at the latest) based on the documentation and building fabric.
commemorated by the later cement slabs. By appearance the timber sheds do not seem to be older than the 1850s and would relate to the Bryce phase of the property.

One Bryce photograph appears to show a large structure on the north side of where the large figs grow. Unfortunately this area was overgrown with dense weed at the time of this survey and possibly partly built over by the Resort building.

Weed clearance and future archaeological investigations may reveal more about the former outbuildings of Erowal Farm.

5.7 Loamy Sand Feature.

Between the kitchen and closer to the Resort remains is an area of soil mixed with brick coloured stone, brick fragments, burned shells (probably from a shell lime mortar) and a fragment of what appears to be an old iron arch bar (used in fireplaces). The feature is difficult to explain, unless it represents the remains of an rammed earth structure. Grass does not seem to favour this soil mixture.

5.8 Animal Yards and Pens.

The documentation reveals that Lamb had extensive cattle runs. Enclosed fenced yards would have been necessary to keep the cattle in from time to time, when getting them ready for sale or even slaughter. The neighbouring property (usually identified as Butler’s) had sheep pens, Erowal Farm would have had equivalent arrangements for cattle if not for sheep also.

The pattern of other properties of the same general period suggest that the fenced yards would have been well behind the house and outbuildings. The most likely location would have been the site of the Resort building.

5.9 Early fencing.

Judging by the number of early post and rail split timber fence posts dumped in the cellar and over the underground cellar entrance, remnant fencing nearby would have been cleared away in recent years. Some of the dumped split timber may also have come from a slab structure.

At the boundary along The Wool Road are a number of early remnants of split timber post and rail fencing. The dating of this road is problematic, the local historian, C Timms, suggests that the road was constructed in 1841 but it is quite possible that, that section of the road was there at an earlier period, considering the amount of activity in that direction even during the 1830s. Post and rail fences of a hundred and fifty years of age or older are not unusual in the older parts of N.S.W.

A number of post and rail components were found in the fence running along the
west side of the track at the entrance of the property but it seems likely that they originated from the fence along the Wool Road.

The remains of early fencing are also an important element of Erowal Farm but only the remnants along the Wool Road are still in situ. Stray pieces should be reused along the remaining sections of post and rail fencing.

5.10 Water Sources

Erowal Farm would have had at least one well located not far from the house or kitchen. As no sign of a well was found during the survey, any well dug on the property would have been back-filled or capped.

Two of the 1890s Bryce photographs show an iron windmill to the north-east of the house. It might have been at this period that the old well was abandoned.

5.11 Sanitary Arrangements

There would have been a series of long-drop toilets excavated not far from the back of the house and kitchen from the 1830s to the 1940s. These are of immense archaeological value, in reconstructing people’s lives. Such pits were also used to dispose of anything broken or of no further use, such as; broken ceramics, glass and food scraps. Some houses during the nineteenth century had ashpits for the disposal of household rubbish and for the large amounts of ash generated by fireplaces and ovens.

No sign of ashpits and long-drop privies were located during the survey but the site is heavily overgrown. The lack of pre 1920s domestic rubbish in the form of broken glass and ceramics on the ground surface suggests that household rubbish was well disposed of (in privy pits or ashpits).

5.12 Valley Dump.

To the north east of the main site, at the base of the ridge, is a dry water course. In and around the watercourse were found glass, metals and ceramics deposited there during the 1930s and up to the very early 1940s. Some of the glass and ceramics were earlier but were generally items which could have been used in a household for years before being disposed of. The material was of a domestic nature: broken cups, saucers, plates, bowls, a water filter, patent medicine or chemical bottles, sauce bottles (one was tomato sauce), wine and beer bottles. Two of the beer bottles bore the dates 1935 and 1941. Beer bottles were normally disposed of after the consumption of the contents so are a good dating indicators.

The dump relates to a late phase of the site history when there were tenants living on the farm.
5.13 Resort Ruins - The Great Hotel Erowal.

At present, the large collapsed concrete slabs and high grass are the most visible aspects of the resort remains when at a distance from the site. On closer inspection the slabs, high grass and weed can be seen to obscure stone foundations. To trace the foundations, weeds and grass had to be cut away using secateurs. Care had to be taken as the mortar is soft and easily comes away with the stone if weeds growing into the foundations are pulled out. The high grass and rank weed growth made it difficult to make an accurate ground plan because of restricted visibility from one area to another and measuring anything but the closest in proximity walls. However, the resultant plan is considered adequate for the purposes of this report.

The stone foundations appear technologically conservative. Although dating to about 1920/1921 they could just as easily, in terms of construction technique and building materials, fit into the mid to late 1800s. The documentation does not allow a date earlier than 1908, when the Bryce family sold the property, and no later than the mid 1920s, when grand plans for the property were dropped. The concrete slabs belong to a slightly later date and were not suited to the nature of the foundations, causing extensive damage through sheer weight and awkwardness of placement.

The stone of the foundations are of local sandstone related to the Hawkesbury and Narrabeen groups, in contrast to the mainly basalt stone used in the old farm house and kitchen. Unlike the sandstone around the Sydney area some of the sandstone contains marine fossils similar to those found in mudstone deposits in the Quorrobolong area on the way to Kurri Kurri. The blocks of stone were hammer dressed at the most and arranged in rubble wall formation. The mortar used was a soft mix of local unwashed quartz sand, giving the mortar a light orangy brown hue. The lime was a fine rock lime, sparingly used but well mixed with the sand.

Bricks were used very sparingly. One lot were found in a double (back to back) fireplace located near the centre of the building. These bricks lined the base of the fireplace and appear to have been meant to stay radiating heat. The bricks were of all dates and styles (plain hand-moulded bricks possibly form the original farm phase; hand moulded bricks with round edged rectangular frogs (depressions), dating possibly from the 1850s; and some machine moulded bricks typical of about 1890s to 1920s). There was a short row of brick apparently fallen from the top of the foundation wall between the cellar and the room to the east (also second hand bricks). The walls of the underground tunnel entrance into the cellar, dating to after the construction of the stone foundations, were made of carefully laid brickwork. Also of a date later than the stone walls were the impressions of rows of frogged (rectangular impressions) bricks, set in portland cement, on some of the concrete slabs on the east side of the site, forming the base of intended partitions.

The foundations were built, for all practical purposes, at one time. No indication was found during the survey that there were periods of time between start and finish of the walls, despite the apparently eccentric layout in some places. However, when the weeds and grass have been eliminated from the site more details may
Right: The entrance into the cellar from the short underground passage. The east wall of the passage has been shifted out of plumb due to the weight of the later concrete slab (200mm thick). The timber in the foreground came from animal enclosures, fences or even slab outbuildings.

Below: Cellar of the Resort ruins. The top course of stone has mostly collapsed into the cellar area. The material dumped into the cellar area originate from several of the outbuildings and fences destroyed by fire in the late 1940s.
RESORT FOOTINGS
Schematic Plan

CONCRETE SLAB 3

LUMBER

CONCRETE

2 METRE DEEP CELLAR

LOADING BAY

EXISTING TRACK

SHELD

LIMESTONE ROCKS

R.V.JV
MAR 1999
come to light.

The thickness of the walls were intended to conform to the old measure of 18 inches, or one and a half foot (457mm), but in fact exceeded the measure in many places to just over a half metre (500mm). The intentions seem to have been for a two storey house of timber (note the base plates were of timber).

The site of the ruin slopes from west to east and south to north. The foundations, as exposed, may be less than 300mm at the highest point of the land at the west end and is as high as 1580mm at the east extreme. The cellar has been filled with rubbish to a certain extent and the floor may have silted somewhat: the deepest measurement taken from the original wall height was found to be nearly two metres.

Approximately eighty percent of the top of the foundation wall has been damaged over the years. The greatest damage has been caused by the later concrete floor slabs capping of some verandah areas and areas intended for toilets and bathrooms. The slabs were so heavy that over time the stone walls crumbled resulting in collapse or severe damage to the wall. Several of the slabs broke as a result of their own weight after collapse. Other parts of the wall have crumbled for unknown reasons.

In places where the top of the foundation walls have survived, distinct marks were noticed. These marks were left after base wall plates were installed and then mortared into place. Whether the base wall plates actually supported room partitions is not yet known. Little or no demolition rubble was found in the foundation areas, apart from stone from collapsed foundation walls, suggesting that the superstructure was never built or it was partially built and later carefully dismantled for use elsewhere. No broken window glass was found.

The thick concrete slabs created over verandah spaces and areas, intended for toilets and bathrooms, belong to a slightly later phase, probably after a change of ownership during the mid 1920s. The slabs over the north verandah are plain whereas those over the east end walls have a series of holes at regular intervals with partition marks between them. The latter were for toilets and perhaps bathrooms. The partition marks suggest that the walls may have been partially constructed. There were no signs of removed plumbing under the holes, indicating that the work was abandoned at an early stage. There were no signs found of steps leading to the high north verandah or even under the verandah, however the formal entrance was more likely to have been on the east side or, less likely, the west side (note the position of the entrance to the cellar).

The concrete slabs were found to be of a great thickness, tending to 220mm in thickness. Fragmented reddish and white sandstone was used in the concrete mix (resembling crushed brick). The concrete was reinforced with round shafted rod iron. There seems to be a mixture of portland cement and lime mortar in the composition of the slabs. The slabs were poured in situ, as evidenced by the forming of sawn timber, possibly flooring timber, as seen underneath the slabs. The timber was from several sources judging by the circular and upright saw marks left
Right: Section of the Resort foundations showing evidence of a base wall plate in outline in mortar of the same kind as used in the foundations.

Below: Foundations of a hallway and a series of small bedrooms. Located at the south-east area of the ruins.
on the concrete. Most of the concrete slabs broke up under their own weight after the stone foundations gave way. It seems that the builders were new to the use of concrete and overcompensated without giving thought to the load-bearing capacity of the stone foundations.

It will be recommended that all the collapsed slabs be carefully crane lifted off the stone foundations, leaving the remains of one broken section on the ground for future reference. The ground level slabs should remain in situ.

There are also extensive concrete floors laid on the ground along the south and west perimeter of the ruins. These were no doubt intended to be sheltered by verandah roofs and used as recreation areas.

The outlines of the concrete floors on the west side of the intended building were irregular and difficult to plot because of rank grass growth. The outline as could be determined seemed to suggest two centre projecting verandah bays.

The cellar is of particular interest. The tops of the walls have suffered damage but it appears that it was intended to be about two metres deep. No steps were found in the cellar but access seems to have been via a short underground tunnel leading out northwards. The sides of the tunnel entrance were made of well laid brickwork and capped with a concrete slab. The slab proved too heavy for the brickwork and the east side brick wall has tilted inwards (at the top at least 300mm out of plumb). The junction of the brickwork with that of the cellar stonework indicates that it was built as an afterthought at a later stage. The extent of the tunnel northwards couldn’t be determined because of the timber dumped over it and the thick grass. There is an unexplained depression to the north of the cellar and next to it a pile of earth.

Monumental lumps of what appear to be lime stone is located to the south west of the Resort site. Whether this was the source of the lime used in mortar is not known.

5.14 Remnant Plantings

A surprising number of trees, shrubs and plants survive from the several phases of the Erowal Farm property. They consist of those that represent the same plant as originally planted and those that are descendants of plants once planted on the property. Some plants were not evident or easy to identify because it was not the right season, for example, bulb plants. Photographs of the Bryce period dating to the 1890s show a number of trees and shrubs still evident on site. The photographs show that there was not a formal garden around the house that was evident at that stage, apart from the four Camellias. The grass about the house was anything but manicured.

The remnant plantings are every bit as important as other archaeological features as they can be regarded as living archaeology and memorials to the personalities that planted and cared for them. Remnant plantings may contribute substantially about the former layout of a property, where buildings were or were not and at what period. Remnant plantings reveal a lot about what the owners intended, how they
View of Erowal Farm house site to the right of the oaks in the distance. In the mid foreground is the north elevation of the Resort ruins, the north-east corner is marked by the small tree. The grove area is marked by the Norfolk Pine.

View southward between the English Oaks, looking toward what was the east elevation of Erowal Farm house. Two of the Camellia trees are seen in the middle. The ground surface under trees and shrubs will need covering and fertilizer after the thick Kikuyu grass is removed, to prevent stress and sudden dehydration.
saw themselves, fashions of the day, landscape design, even where the owners came from. Such plants should be regarded as well documented genetic stock from early colonial imports and, in this day and age, may reveal aspects of colonial life well outside the limits of a particular property study. For example, it is known that young English oaks were actively propagated at Parramatta Government House grounds for colonial distribution from stock originally planted by Governor Macquarie around 1816 or earlier (produce seed when only a few years old). Norfolk Pines were planted in Sydney as early as the 1790s and often mark the site of an old house or farm long after all physical signs of building have disappeared. Some plants bear testimony of early international trade patterns.

The fairly harsh and exposed conditions on the knoll of the site has had the effect of slowing the growth of some of the trees and shrubs, making them appear younger than they actually are.

5.14.1 List of Trees and Shrubs

English Oak (Quercus robur). Two hollow very ancient specimens grow to the east of the original farm building. They very likely predate the Bryces of the 1850s. Their position raises some suspicion that the layout of the original farm buildings may be very different to what is apparent today. It is normal for ancient oaks to become hollow - in the wild nutrients from birds and climbing animals are channelled into the root area. These trees being so openly exposed will need to be fenced off as part of a landscaping scheme (public liability). These trees may have been propagated at the grounds of Government House at Parramatta or descendants of one of those trees (which were distributed around the colony).

Norfolk Pine (Araucaria heterophylla). Though the tree is not tall, it appears to be over 130 years old (based on other dated specimens on Norfolk Island). It also appears in an 1890s photograph as a tall young tree. It was most likely transported as a seedling or seed directly from Norfolk Island (Isaac Robinson being one of the chief exporters at that time). The tree appears to have lost its top about fifty years ago, perhaps in a windstorm or it was hit by lightening. It now has three tops. On Norfolk Island old trees are often successfully rejuvenated by removing dying tops.

Port Jackson Figs (Ficus rubiginosa). There are two of these trees. These are also ancient trees and can be seen in photographs of the 1890s. Such trees often mark early properties. Several species of tropical figs seem to have been very popular during the 1830s and 1840s and are often features of old cattle and sheep stations, perhaps as shade trees.

Camellia trees (Camellia japonica?). There are four of these shrubs/trees, two to each side of the original front steps. These four Camellias also feature as well established shrubs in the 1890s, so would be a minimum of 120 years old.
Right: Scene from the north side of the cellar looking southward over the Resort ruins toward the grove. The Norfolk Pine is in the center and the Port Jackson Figs are to the top right of the photograph. The Resort ruins are particularly overgrown in this area.

Below: Showing the Port Jackson Figs. Large curved branches bend toward the ground, providing an interesting atmosphere and a natural windbreak. Such trees were planted for their shade potential from about the 1830s in the older parts of Australia.
Conifer or Pine Species (Family: Cupressaceae or Pinaceae). The fallen trunk of an old conifer or pine was located in the grove near the Norfolk Pine.

Unidentified Tree. A large old tree awaiting identification but possibly seen in the 1890s photographs.

Fig Tree (Ficus carica) A small bush survives in the long grass to the north of the kitchen. This bush has sprung from the fallen trunk of a once large edible-fig tree. Fig trees are often part of old kitchen gardens. Pending further evidence, it can not be established at what period the fig was introduced on the property.

Coral Trees (Erythrina speciosa). Two old specimens and a number of later date trees grow at the west end of the grove. Coral trees, contrary to common opinion can be very slow growing when planted as trees. The oldest specimens are probably at least 60 years old and should be preserved.

Coral trees are easily struck from fallen branches and a number of young ones have sprung up north of the fig trees. There is also a small grove of them at the south end of the resort ruins, the result of branches being stacked there during a site clean up within the last decade (these should be removed).

Native Daphne (Pittosporum undulatum). A bushy old specimen grows at the south-west corner of the old farm house site. This specimen may have been planted over 50 years ago. These trees are difficult to date because they can be fast or slow growing depending on circumstances. They are easily propagated from seed and a number of young plants are scattered over the site. They are also a common shrub in native regrowth forests on the property.

Camphor Laurel (Cinnamomum camphora). There are no old examples on the property but there may have been once, judging by the number of young trees spread about. A group of spindly trees grow to the lower south-west of the grove acting as an effective windbreak. Two have dangerously established themselves in the resort ruins.

Chinese Privet (Ligustrum sinense). Privet is just beginning to establish itself on the site, the seed having been blown in or carried by birds. Both species of common privet (including Ligustrum lucidum) are probably to be found on the property, perhaps originating from the housing estate nearby.

Pink Oleander (Nerium oleander) Three were noted on the site: two specimens, a smaller one and a larger one between the house and the kitchen; and one larger specimen just to the west of the house remains. The larger specimens, at least, have every appearance of having been deliberately planted. The harsh growing conditions have probably checked
the size of the plants. As the site was abandoned by the late 1940s, the bushes would have to be at least 50 years old.

Buttercup Tree (Cassia corymbosa).
Well away from the farm site and ruins, one large tree-like specimen was found in the forest regrowth area on the west side of the drive not far from the property entrance.

Acacia sp
These native plants are recolonizing the grasslands and dominate some of the native regrowth areas. One large specimen grows to the west of the resort ruins and there is a large stand some distance north of the resort ruins.

Prunus sp? (Family: Rosaceae).
Several largish shrubs were found growing at the north end of the resort ruins. They have serrated leaves similar to some Prunus species but as they were not in flower, identification was unsuccessful. They appear to be descendants of plants once on the property. The largest specimen may have been growing there while the property was still habited.

5.14.2 Plants

There wasn’t time to make a survey of exotic plants. The ones mentioned here are the most obvious on site. Bulb plants were well out of season to be noticed.

Agapanthus (Agapanthus orientalis)
One cluster was found north of the kitchen, not far from the edible fig tree. It probably marks the site of a former garden. As the fig, this hardy plant is being crowded out by grass.

White Arum Lily (Zantedeschia aethiopica).
These grow beneath the trees of the grove of remnant plantings, there being more shade and moisture and less competition from the grasses. These are garden escapes and often feature in the borders of very old gardens.

5.14.3 Weeds and Grasses

A great number of native and introduced grasses and weeds were seen, the following are considered the most numerous or inconvenient. It will be recommended that they be eliminated from the site, particularly Kikuyu grass as the runners damage historic walls, archaeological deposits and present a threat to historical remnant plantings.

Paspalum grass (Paspalum dilatatum).
This grass is one of the most common along the open parts of the ridge and around the farm and ruin sites. The growth is thick and high making it difficult to
walk about unless there is a track.

Kikuyu grass (Pennisetum clandestinum). Rank growth of this grass is found all around the farm and resort ruins, as it favours disturbed ground. The underground runners cause damage to historic fabric and choke out most other plants. Soil tends to build up wherever it grows as it ‘captures’ windblown particles. It was probably introduced to the farm during the 1920s or 1930s (as elsewhere in Australia).

Bracken (Pteridium esculentum and Pteridium sp). Two species dominate which are found scattered about the property. The hard and soft leaf forms also cluster around the house and Resort ruin amongst the high Kikuyu and Paspalum grasses adding to the impenetrability.

Stinging Nettle (Urtica urens). These are found growing among the ruins and farms site, weaving through the grass and brambles. This sting from this plant is very painful and makes movement through the area difficult.

Blackberry/Brambles (Rubus fruticosus). The brambles are largely confined to the resort ruin site. Brambles favour ruin sites and concentrations of them in neglected fields can sometimes lead to the discovery of an old building site. The plants made access to parts of the ruins difficult, especially when combined with Stinging Nettle.
6.0 Site Management According to Heritage Principles

6.1 Introduction

Practical options are proposed under item 7.0 for the management of the archaeology of the site so that the statutory obligations may be met by the developers. The words 'archaeology of the site' includes above-ground remains, below-ground remains and remnant plantings as identified under section 5.0 or anything of historical significance that may emerge during proposed work done on the property. The word 'site' here refers to the area of Erowal Farm house, outbuildings, remnant plantings and the Resort ruins.

This report confirms Shoalhaven City Council findings that the site is to be regarded as an archaeological resource, note Statement of Significance under item 2. The Council listing for the site and the findings of this report make it eligible for heritage listing under the Heritage Act of New South Wales (1977). An outline of the responsibilities of the developer is provided under item 3.0.

There remains the question of visual impact as discussed in the Development Advisory Unit (Meeting 25 November 1998, page 2) but as applies to the historic site. It will be important that the view of the historic plantings continue to dominate the landscape which appears in accord with statements already expressed at the DAU meeting.

The policy statement should be adopted as the overriding guiding principles in regards to the archaeological resource of the site.


The first concern should be to preserve all significant items relating to the archaeological site. All pre-1950s features of the site must be retained and conserved in situ.

The site should be preserved as 'status quo' after elements have been removed that have been identified as endangering or likely to endanger the integrity of the site (such as plants causing damage, collapsed concrete slabs) and elements stabilized (such as fallen walls, unstable masonry). Apart from maintenance, no element of the site should be altered or removed unless specified according to ICOMOS and Burra Charter guidelines. Sympathetic elements may be added to protect and conserve the archaeology of the site as long as they are reversible and in accordance with professional heritage advice. Site interpretation should be unobtrusive. Public site access should be planned and well organized avoiding anything that may lead to damage. Landscaping should favour the long-term health and protection of significant remnant plantings.
This schematic plan shows the full extent of the archaeological resource, including the historical plantings. The research and survey revealed no other archaeological impediment that should hinder the proposed development of the retirement village.
EXTENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE COMPARED TO THE PROPERTY SIZE (CLOSERLY HATCHED AREA IN THE CENTRE)

Reduced Sketch Plan
Allen, Price & Associates
Reference Number 23188