

**EVALUATION OF WILTON GRASSLANDS
HISTORIC SITE**

WILTON, NSW.

A REPORT PREPARED FOR GUTTERIDGE HASKINS & DAVEY

MARCH 1993

WENDY THORP

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

1.0	Preface to the Report	1
1.1	The Study Area - Parameters of the Investigation	1
1.2	Context of the Investigation	1
1.3	Objectives	1
1.4	Methodology	2
1.5	Authorship and Acknowledgements	2
2.0	The Evidence	3
2.1	Documentary Evidence	3
2.1.1	Regional Influences	3
2.1.2	Occupation of the Study Area	3
2.2	Physical Evidence	5
2.3	Significance of the Site	5
3.0	Environmental Assessment	6
3.1	The Proposal and its Impact	6
3.2	Management Requirements	6
3.3	Recommendations	7
4.0	Subsidiary Documentation	8
4.1	Bibliography	8

SECTION 1.0 PREFACE TO THE REPORT

1.1 The Study Area - Parameters of the Investigation

This investigation was concerned with a site of former European occupation in the area of Wilton known as the Wilton Grasslands. The study area and main area of impact of the proposed development is located on Portions 16 and 29 of the Parish of Wilton, County of Camden. This area is proposed to be used as a residual disposal site within the Macarthur Water Quality Project. Portion 44 may also be impacted upon for this purpose.

The investigation was concerned with identifying the site or sites of historic occupation and evaluating the significance of that occupation. The evidence encompassed by this identification was understood to encompass structural features, topographic changes, vegetation, relics and sub-surface archaeological evidence.

1.2 Context of the Investigation

This investigation has been undertaken at the request of Gutteridge Haskins and Davey. It responds to a recommendation made in a report by Navin Officer Archaeological Resources Management, "*Archaeological Assessment of Proposed Sydney Water Board Disposal Areas, Appin and Wilton Districts, NSW*" (Sydney Water Board 1992).

In this report an historic site (Site 6) was identified within the nominated Area G; additional study was considered necessary to evaluate its significance and management needs. In Section 9 of the "*Environmental Impact Statement For the Proposed Macarthur Water Quality Project*" (Mitchell McCotter for the Water Board 1992) similar uncertainty was expressed regarding the heritage significance of this site.

1.3 Objectives

The principal objectives of this investigation were to:

- assess the cultural significance of this site
- evaluate the impact of the proposal on that significance

- determine management requirements which are commensurate with the significance of the site and which will mitigate the impact of that proposal on the site.

1.4 Methodology

To achieve these objectives the following tasks were carried out:

- primary and secondary archival research was conducted in the principal repositories of the Mitchell and State Libraries, the State Archives Office of NSW, the Lands Department and Land Titles Office. No research existed for this site prior to this investigation.
- a visual survey was made of the site and its various features. This survey did not encompass any physical intervention or investigation.

1.5 Authorship and Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Wendy Thorp. The author would like to thank Mr M. Carney for his assistance with the research for the site.

SECTION 2.0 THE EVIDENCE

2.1 Documentary Evidence

2.1.1 Regional Influences

A discussion of the general historical development of the district was presented by Navin Officer in their assessment. It concludes that the earliest land grants in the district were made in the 1830s with a town plan formed and lots sold in Wilton during the 1840s.

The principal economic basis of the area until the later nineteenth century was agrarian based; wheat, maize, barley and oats production. The impact of poor farming techniques and crop diseases inevitably led to the replacement of this form of farming with stock production. Hay, however, remained an important crop and continued to be grown to support the livestock. Dairying, at first a relatively unimportant aspect of this industry, eventually came to dominate it during the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.

The third important influence on the district aside from the changing basis of livelihood, was the exploitation of the area for water resources. The first weir and other diversion works were planned and constructed in the 1870s and 1880s and major works were carried out in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Reserves designed to protect water quality were proclaimed in 1880, 1915 and 1923. These reservations are likely to have entailed demolition of existing structures.

2.2.2 Occupation of the Study Area

The occupation and inter-connection of the two principal properties, portions 29 and 16, demonstrate a close personal and commercial relationship between the owners. The history of ownership and acquisition suggests a pattern of land grant and land use that mirrors the general patterns described for the area in the preceding section. In particular the gradual merging of the properties to a single estate in the 1890s suggests a change to dairying which would have required the enlarged property to support it.

Portion 16 was granted to David Chalmers and Charles William Wall in August 1839. This is consistent with the heightened interest in local property after the initial land grants were made and with the expectation of the imminent formation of a township. Chalmers

and Wall held the property in trust for Mary Maziere until she came of age.

During Maziere's period of ownership it was leased for seven years to Edward Hewitt. This was in 1852. Hewitt owned the adjoining Portion 58. In 1877 Maziere sold the property to Hewitt's widow Elizabeth. It is likely that at least some of the improvements seen in the landscape today belong to the period of Edward Hewitt's occupancy.

Portion 29 was granted to George Donelly in July 1842. It was noted, however, that Donelly had acquired authorized possession of the land in 1831 and may have been in possession even before that time. If this is the case it would be one of the earliest occupancies in the district.

Donelly left his sixty acre property, in 1845, to James Tyson. Tyson retained this portion until 1890 and it is most likely that he was responsible for most of the improvements that now may be seen as archaeological evidence.

During the 1880s his neighbour, Elizabeth Hewitt, approached him to buy his land, obviously trying to consolidate the three portions (58, 16 and 29) into one block. She paid him 120 pounds but no conveyance was ever recorded of this transaction.

Hewitt died intestate in 1888 leaving six daughters (and their husbands) and three sons as heirs. Her oldest son, Stephen Hewitt, was appointed executor. He and the rest of Hewitt's heirs made claim to Portion 29, still owned by Tyson, on the basis of the transaction made by their mother in the 1880s. Tyson agreed to the transfer and in 1890 all three portions (58, 16 and 29) became the property of the combined heirs. Almost immediately they sold it to Edward and William Hewitt (the two other sons). There appears to have been some ill feeling between Stephen and his relatives.

During 1900 Edward and William engaged in some complicated transactions that appear to have been for the purpose of establishing tenancy in common. Their sister Isabella was also included as an owner and eventually became sole proprietor. In 1941 she sold the property to John Harbord Hawkey and he, in turn, sold it in 1944 to J. Garton. Garton retained it until 1948 when it was sold to the Water Board who have remained the sole owner until the present day.

2.2 Physical Evidence

The general results of the survey carried out by Navin Officer have been confirmed during this investigation. The principal elements of the historic site comprise:

- remnant, largely ruined above-ground structural elements
- in-ground former building sites with some structural features in situ (huts, sheds, reservoir etc)
- fence lines (indicated by posts, post holes)
- scatters and dumps of relics (small artefacts, building materials and machine parts)
- introduced landscape elements (exotic vegetation)
- alterations/additions to the landscape (such as dams)

The relationship of the elements within the historic site, the nature of those sites and the evidence which is available for dating them confirms Navin Officer's assessment that this is likely to be a homestead site with out-buildings devoted to the principal interests of the farm. This farm is likely to have commenced operation in the mid-nineteenth century and, throughout its life added to and removed elements as those needs altered. It is likely to have been demolished in the 1940s.

2.3 Significance of the Site

The site documents a typical pattern of occupation and farm management for a long period of regional history. For that reason it is a valuable historical resource. It may also be concluded, however, that this type of evidence is well and better represented at other sites such as those at Windmill Hill.

On this basis it has been concluded that this site has some local significance as a contributing source to documenting the history of the region and may contain some comparatively early evidence of occupancy. However, this significance is not assessed to be of such magnitude to warrant the long term preservation of the site and its component parts.

SECTION 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 The Proposal and its Impact

The works proposed for this site include:

- upgrading the access road from the Mt Keira Road
- the construction of turning bays off the access road and a truck loop
- the construction of a sediment control dam
- the construction of grassed drainage channels which would deliver into the dam
- the residuals would be spread over the surface of the site (which would have the topsoil removed to a depth of approximately 100 - 150mm) in areas of between 11 - 20 metres square.

The construction of the bays, loop, dam and channels and the removal of topsoil are certain to disturb and in some cases remove elements of the homestead/farm site. The effect of this work will be to destroy interrelationships between sites and to remove the potential interpretation of the site as that of a former homestead and farm. It will also destroy detailed aspects of cultural and social history which could be used to more adequately document the use and evolution of this specific site.

3.2 Management Requirements

The period of occupation on this site evidenced by both primary documentation and physical evidence comes within the parameters of the fifty year or older date established by the Heritage Act of NSW. In particular the physical evidence of that occupation is protected by the provisions of that Act which pertain to relics. A relic is defined as,

"any deposit, object or material evidence relating to the settlement of the area that comprises New South Wales, not being Aboriginal settlement and which is fifty or more years old."

Amendments made to the Heritage Act in 1987 require that a person shall not remove

a relic protected by a conservation instrument without approval from the Heritage Council. Further no-one may disturb or excavate land in New South Wales (except Commonwealth owned land) to discover, expose or remove a relic without an Excavation Permit issued by the Heritage Council of NSW.

It has been concluded in this investigation that:

- the site encompasses physical evidence of a homestead and out-buildings and other features that relate to domestic and farming occupation of the second half of the nineteenth century. This occupation is likely to have been discontinued and subsequently largely removed from the landscape in the first half of the twentieth century.
- the site has local significance for its documentation of a substantial and typical pattern of local occupation over a long period of time. However, it has also been concluded that similar evidence is better preserved at other sites.

3.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the most appropriate course of action to mitigate the effects of the proposed development and use of this site as part of the water quality programme is as follows:

- application to the NSW Heritage Council for an Excavation Permit to encompass a recording and monitoring programme of archaeological work
- a detailed survey and recording of all physical evidence contained within the study area prior to the redevelopment of the site
- a monitoring and recording programme of all archaeological evidence unearthed during the course of the redevelopment of the site
- complete archival documentation of this evidence after the completion of the work. Copies of this record to be lodged with an appropriate local archival repository and with the Department of Planning (to comply with the conditions of the Excavation Permit).

When these steps have been successfully undertaken there will be no requirement to preserve this site.

SECTION 4.0 SUBSIDIARY DOCUMENTATION

4.1 Bibliography

Mitchell Mcotter

Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Macarthur Water Quality Project
Water Board. 1992.

Navin Officer Archaeological Resource Management

Archaeological Assessment of Proposed Sydney Water Board Disposal Areas, Appin and Wilton Districts, NSW.

Sydney Water Board. 1992.

Shepherd, P.

Coach House Chronicles Wilton and East Bargo a Brief History

Picton and District Historical Society. 1991.

Whitworth, R.

Bailliere's New South Wales Gazetteer and Road Guide

F.P. Bailliere. 1866.

Land Titles Office of NSW

Book 9 Folio 891

Book 38 Folio 189

Book 51 Folio 101

Book 166 Folio 937

Book 438 Folio 625

Book 438 Folio 626

Book 900 Folio 30

Book 900 Folio 162

Book 903 Folio 659

Book 903 Folio 30

Book 905 Folio 618

Book 1900 Folio 543

Book 1951 Folio 936

Book 2069 Folio 496

Grant Index serial 24., 463

Grant Index Serial 35., 213

Grant Index Serial 61., 131

Grant Index Serial 71., 257