

Interim Progress Report

Proposed Heritage Park, Castle Hill

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## Introduction

This interim progress report is divided into four sections: report on the research undertaken; report on maps, plans and illustrative material; report on the preliminary site survey; and interim recommendations.

Our approach has been to first concentrate solidly on the research aspect of the investigation before attempting to do a thorough site survey; this is important when sites are involved with minimal above ground evidence.

The documentary evidence of the building and land modifying aspects of the site has been organized in a strictly chronological sequence to facilitate a rapid understanding of the site over the years. As new information is found, the data is incorporated into the established historical framework.

The final documentary report will include the chronological history of the site and separate discussions under headings such as Barracks/Asylum, School House, Changing Landuse, Water supply etc.

Plans and maps are being studied and reconciled so that a series of plans in the form of overlays may be presented to illustrate the building history of the site, changing boundaries, subdivisions, etc. over given stretches of years.

Tentative reconstructions of the appearance and fabric of buildings are being formulated on the basis of illustrative material (1801-1810 general view, 1866 sketch of the Asylum, 1826 plan of school house), documentary and archaeological evidence.

The main thrust of the physical site survey has just begun. It was felt that before a thorough site survey could be made, a reliable documentary background should be established to elucidate the relicts and features of the site.

Conclusions on relicts and features are being reached on the basis of building materials analysis, building techniques, boundary and space relationships and a synthesis of documentary evidence.

For the remaining contracted period, we intend to follow-up the leads which the research to date has uncovered. The site survey will continue as before. Pending the appropriate approval excavation will begin in the form of test trenches on the established surveyed sites of the Asylum and School house.

1. Historical Research Summary

The approach taken with the archival and library research consists of examining separately the primary and secondary sources, making notes and comparing these, and finally compiling a Chronological Sequence of Events. Where any detail could not be checked from primary sources, or difference of opinion occurs between secondary sources, this is acknowledged and discussed as a "Comment". Any relevant maps and plans are included in the sequence under the year of their drawing or surveying.

During the research programme, all of the material (including maps) provided by the Hills District Historical Society was checked either directly, by reference, or indirectly, through general research. It was considered necessary to thoroughly investigate all secondary sources.

Research of Primary Sources Completed

Historic Records of Australia

Historic Records of New South Wales

As most secondary sources quote these Records, a thorough and systematic search was carried out to glean all available information on the sites in question (the Government farm, the lunatic asylum and the school house).

Special attention was directed to any mention of buildings constructed and building materials used, to help an assessment of any archaeological evidence which may remain. "Reports of Public Works" have been listed where any reference to Castle Hill occurs. By studying these in

conjunction with the "Employment Returns" (which list the numbers and occupations of convicts employed), important information has been gathered on the types of buildings which could have been constructed using these categories of labour. These Employment Returns will be included in the final report.

Governor Macquarie's Journal

Watkin Tench's Journal

Rev. Hassell's Journal

Although these journals have only fleeting references to the settlements at Castle Hill, they are considered relevant as they are "eyewitness", contemporary accounts.

The State Archives of New South Wales

Extensive use has been made of the Archives in collecting both documentary information and maps.

A large number of the weekly reports from the supervisor of the lunatic asylum to the Governor are available on microfilm, and have provided relevant material. Special attention was again given to any report describing the condition or requirements of the buildings (as regards repairs and renovations) or other aspects which may facilitate the archaeological investigation. Some new information has come to light: in 1822 the superintendent asked again that covers for the wells be provided - this may refer to the wells which still exist on the site.

Maps held by the Archives have also been very useful. The research has verified that the maps used by the Baulkham

Hills Shire Council are the earliest practicable maps to reconstruct the layout of the site.

In addition to these, an 1826 plan of the school house has been located which shows the ground plan and measurements of the building.

#### The Department of Lands

All maps relating to this portion of Castle Hill have been examined and some photocopies made. Most of the maps of historic interest are now lodged in the State Archives (see above).

#### The Registrar General's Department

The land grant to the United Church of England and Ireland dated 9th May, 1842, has been examined and notes taken.

#### The Mitchell Library

The Maps Catalogue has been consulted and some photocopies made.

All references to Castle Hill in the Sydney Gazette have been examined and some noted. Many secondary sources quote the Sydney Gazette regarding the establishment of the asylum, and it was considered worthwhile thoroughly checking this contemporary source.

The Catalogue of Printed Books was examined and a list of relevant material compiled.

Research of Secondary Sources Completed

The Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society

A visit was made to History House and the index to the Journal consulted. All references to Castle Hill were checked and relevant ones noted.

Articles by James Jervis F.R.A.H.S. contain the most information on Castle Hill and all references given by Jervis have been investigated. However, most references were to the Historical Records of Australia and the Historical Records of New South Wales and as such had already been noted in separate research (see above).

John Bostock "The Dawn of Australian Psychiatry"

This book has a short chapter on the history of the lunatic asylum. Most references given had already been noted from previous separate research. However, some references to the Bonwick Transcripts have yet to be investigated (see below).

Ritchie, The Bigge Report

This contains a report by Dr. Bland - the surgeon at the asylum from 1814-15 - on conditions at the asylum during the period he was there. He emphasizes the lack of medicines available and the poor condition of the building.

Current Research

The Mitchell Library

Certain material at the library is currently being

researched and will be included in the Final Report.

- (a) The Jervis Index
- (b) The Manuscript Index Catalogue and Manuscript Leaf Catalogue
- (c) Proceedings of the N.S.W. Legislative Council
- (d) The Bigge Report (Bonwick Transcripts)

The Registrar General's Department

The original land grants are being investigated. However, due to problems associated with the Old Systems Title and limited access to certain material, it is not yet known if all the relevant information will be forthcoming.

It is believed that the research programme outlined above will provide an adequate background to the history of the site at Castle Hill. As the emphasis has been on primary source material, a clear picture of the development of the site has emerged. This method overcomes the problems of conflicting secondary sources which, nevertheless, are included and discussed in the Chronological Sequence of Events.



2. Plans, Maps, and Illustrative Material

There are several extant historical maps and plans relating to the proposed Commemorative or Heritage Park at Castle Hill. The earliest dates to 1832 when the Old Asylum and Cottage had already been converted respectively into the Church of St. Simon and a school. As yet, no maps or plans have been found which are contemporary with the Government Farm or Asylum.

The maps are as follows:-

No. 1: "Survey of the 40 acres of Glebe out of the Church and School land of 200 acres at Castle Hill, including the 20 acres already occupied as Glebe". Surveyed by Felton Mathew, and dated to 1832.

No. 2: "Survey of the land occupied by the Schoolmaster at Castle Hill on the 200 acres of Church and School land". Surveyed by Felton Mathew, and dated to 1832. The Field notes for this survey are also extant.

No. 3: "County of Cumberland, Parish of Castle Hill. Survey of 40 acres - intended for a church, school house and Glebe". Surveyed by Butler and dated to 1837.

No. 4: "Plan of Church and School Estates in the Counties of Cumberland and Roxburgh". Dated to 1842.

No. 5: "Church and School land, Parish of Castle Hill, County of Cumberland". Dated to 1870.

These five maps complete the C19 maps as yet located. The C20 maps will be discussed in the Final Report but show mainly the sequence of later land subdivision and do not

complement the historical framework of the site to any great degree.

The five Cl9 maps may be discussed under three headings:-

1) Location of School and Old Asylum

N. R. Smerdon, Registered Surveyor, recently completed a study, commissioned by the Hills District Historical Society, to relocate the School and Asylum using F. Mathew's notes for Map No. 2.

This work has been checked by overlaying Mathew's map (No. 2) on a modern map of the same scale (4 chains to 1 inch).

The photographic reproduction of the map produced by the Archives Authority of N.S.W. was not adequate for this purpose, since it had not been reproduced to actual size. Using an overlay of the original plan, Smerdon's relocation of the buildings and other features was confirmed, although there is still some ambiguity over which point should be used as a base line or datum point.

It should be noted that Mathew did not accurately locate or survey the creek or the bridge shown on his map (No. 2): these were only sketched in. We may be reasonably certain however that the bridge was located near to the oblique boundary shown on Mathew's map, and that it is shown in its correct position relative to other features. The bridge is to be relocated by fieldwork and some progress has already been made in this direction.

The oblique boundary behind the Asylum shown on the 1832 maps (Nos. 1 and 2) and Butler's 1837 map (No. 3) poses

some problems. It does not exist as a boundary today, and is not on the fence line at the rear of the property adjacent to the Asylum. This is confirmed both by Smerdon's work and also by the overlay of Mathew's map (No. 2). The significance of this boundary is unknown but may be revealed by current research, but it can be noted that it is almost parallel with the north boundary of the Glebe, and may have been a boundary which was replaced at an early period.

Of the earliest 3 maps (Nos. 1-3) only F. Mathew's large scale map (No. 2) is useful for relocating various features on the site. The other two maps are of too small a scale, 40 chains to one inch and 20 chains to one inch respectively. Furthermore, Butler only sketches in the sites of the school property, Asylum, and oblique boundary on his map (No. 3), surveying accurately only the Glebe.

2) Extent of Church and School land

On the 1842 Map (No. 4), the boundaries of the Glebe and the Church and School land are shown along with acreages, 40 acres and 160 acres respectively. The 1870 map (No. 5) however, gives more accurate and complete acreages, which show that the earlier map is at fault. If the Church and School land is shown correctly on the 1842 map (No. 4) then in reality its acreage would be approximately 151 acres, and with the Glebe, approximately 191 acres, not 200 acres as shown. However, if the straight boundaries of the land are completed to make a rectangle with the addition of the portion across the New North Road, then the acreage totals 208 acres

and 25 perches. There is thus some ambiguity as to the boundaries of the Church and School land and Glebe, but it seems more likely to have included the portion in the north-east corner to take up the complete grid square.

3) Subdivision of the various properties

Study of this question is the subject of current research and will be discussed fully in the final report. The earliest maps to show any subdivision are dated to 1842 (No. 4) and to 1870 (No. 5), and reveal details about the later history of the area.

Illustrative material, other than maps and plans, will be discussed fully in the final report. At present, four articles have been located - a painting of the Government Farm landscape; and an identical copy; an illustration of the Old Asylum before demolition in 1866 from the Illustrated Sydney News; and the most surprising find of a plan for the cottage that was to be converted into the School house. This forms part of a letter dated to 1826 tendering to repair the Asylum and an estimate for the conversion of the cottage into the school.

All this illustrative material, and any other documents that become available, will be discussed in the final report.

In summary, the main emphasis up to now has been on the location and nature of the Asylum and School house, as a preliminary to excavation to locate accurately these remains. Questions that have received attention already are the location of the main buildings, the boundaries of the Church and

School land, and the later subdivision of the various portions. Other questions will be discussed in the final report, including some mention of the areas cleared for the earliest farm, about which little information is available at present.

### 3. Site Survey

The system of site identification used in this report is the same as that used in the "Sketch Plan of Castle Hill Site" prepared by the Hill District Historical Society in conjunction with the Baulkham Hills Shire Council (attached).

Some sites present few problems in terms of access and examination: the site of the bridge (site 5); the "Causeway" (site 2), the wells of sites, 1, 8, and 9, shed and foundations of site 1, and the remains of more recent structures at sites 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Almost nothing remains above ground at the school site (site 12) which is covered with long grass; the same may be said for the Asylum site apart from the hump and fragments of stone and some minute fragments of early brick.

There is little chance that buildings shown in the 1801-1810 painting will have left much evidence excepting perhaps the remains of a packed earth floor and post holes, or at best, a rubble stone footing. Apart from the Asylum building, the other structures would have been built of wattle and daub or perhaps of timber slabs and covered in with thatching or shingles. When structures built of such materials perish, they leave little permanent debris, few nails would have been used in the structure as there was a great scarcity of nails in the colony at the time of the initial building period at the Castle Hill Government Farm. It was Government policy to dismantle structures no longer in use - when a settlement was shifted, the timber buildings were taken apart and re-assembled elsewhere or otherwise sold off for their materials. (This is

well documented when Risdon Cove was abandoned in 1804, the policy was a general one especially for agricultural workers and road builders up to the 1820s).

A few of the later structures at the Castle Hill site show evidence of secondary use of building materials. The shed associated with site 1, judging from the nails used throughout and some of the timbers, dates to the late 1890s or turn of the century. The internal and external walls of the main part of the structure are composed of great upright timber slabs with tapering or adzed ends. The timber slabs of the shed were nailed to comparatively flimsy ground and wall plates or timbers.

Originally, however, the tapering ends of the split timber slabs were slid into ground and wall plates with grooves running along their lengths. It is most likely that the timber slabs were re-used from a nearby earlier structure. A similar example of re-use of slabs may be seen at a farm adjacent to Tuggerah railway station where the slabs of a 1960s cottage were adapted for use in constructing out buildings, dating to about 1900. The date of the shed's slabs are difficult to establish because the technology of making slabs with wedge and maul (and adzing) remained fundamentally unchanged from the founding of the colony to the mid to late nineteenth century. It is likely that they date before c.1870 when wire nails became plentiful and cheap, or perhaps before 1850 when balloon framing, tin sheathing etc. were used to construct humble buildings.

Rubble stone coursing is used to fill the gap between the ground and the ground plate bonded with stone lime mortar and a loamy sand. Some of the stone may have come from the Asylum

as traces of white wash may be seen on them but this needs to be further investigated.

At site 3, the remains of a shed dating to about the 1940s lies in ruins, behind the shed are the remains of a chicken coop composed of some late scantling, wire netting and some lengths of weather boarding. The weather boards are about 16.5cm wide and in thickness they taper from 2cm to almost a point at 5mm. The thick side of the weather boards are beaded. The weather boards date to the nineteenth century but unfortunately, no trace of old nails or nail holes could be found in the surviving sections; also the wood has decomposed considerably obscuring the saw marks. It is now known, through an 1826 tender, that the old school house was weather boarded over a wooden frame filled in with brick nogging.

The building materials at sites 6 and 7 are no earlier than about the 1930s or 1940s, however, some of the sandstone may have been gathered from an earlier site. Site 8 has a mixture of building materials, the majority of which date to the 1930s or 1940s. The domed well may date to the 1870s as may some of the foundation remains. Some scattered bricks date to the 1880s or 1890s.

The earliest sites so far verified include the wells of sites 1 and 9 which may prove to date before 1822. The bridge (site 5) and the surrounding area also appear very early, the bank adjacent to the bridge remains has been cut into considerably and a small pond was formed - these evince strong evidence of early brick making activities.



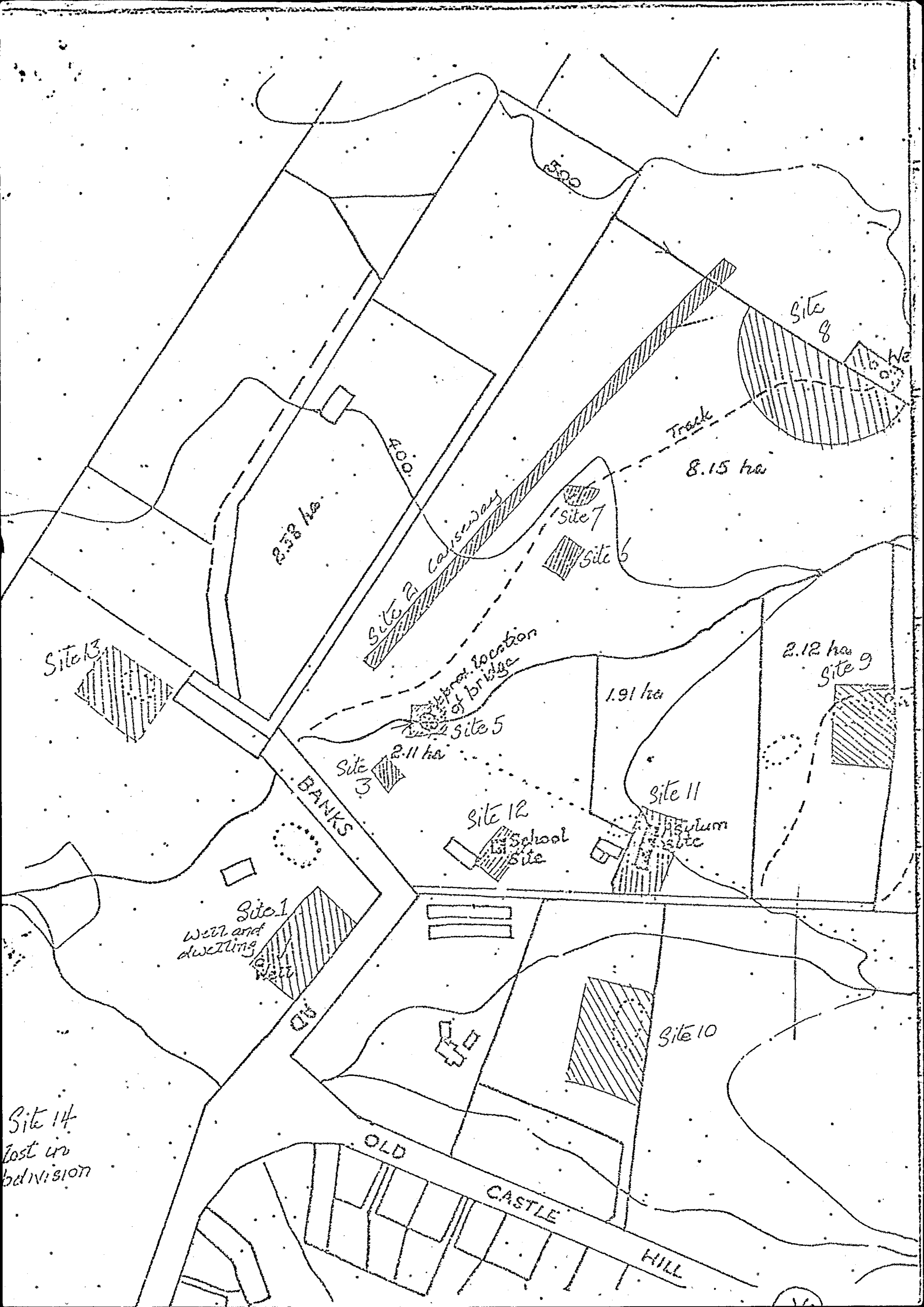
The "Causeway" (site 2) seems to have been used for agricultural purposes as in places deep furrows run parallel to it and the remains of at least two drains running across it (one partly stone lined) have been located. The lower end of the "Causeway" has been carefully retained with stone coursing without mortar for bonding; a lower platform may be seen at a right angle to this end of the "Causeway". From a preliminary examination, it appears to date well before the turn of the century.

The timber slab and packed earth and turf bridge at the end of Banks Road, judging from some nails found in the timber slabs, dates to at least the 1880s. The present railing is about 30 years old. The post and rail fence which respects the boundary of the old Glebe area dates at least to about the 1870s but may prove to be considerably earlier.

These and other sites, as the physical evidence becomes clearer, will be fully discussed in the final report.

4. Recommendation

The historic research carried out to date, comprising documentary evidence, maps, plans and a field survey of extant remains, positively indicates that this site is the location of the government farm, school house and lunatic asylum. As such, it is of major cultural significance and every effort should be made to ensure its permanent protection as part of the National Estate and as a Place of Significance in terms of the Australia ICOMOS Charter.



Site 13

2.58 ha

Site 2  
Cauldrons

Site 7  
Site 6

Track  
8.15 ha

Site 8  
We

Site 3

Site 3  
2.11 ha

approx. location  
of bridge  
Site 5

1.91 ha

2.12 ha  
Site 9

BANKS

Site 12  
School site

Site 11  
Paulum site

Site 1  
Well and dwelling

Well

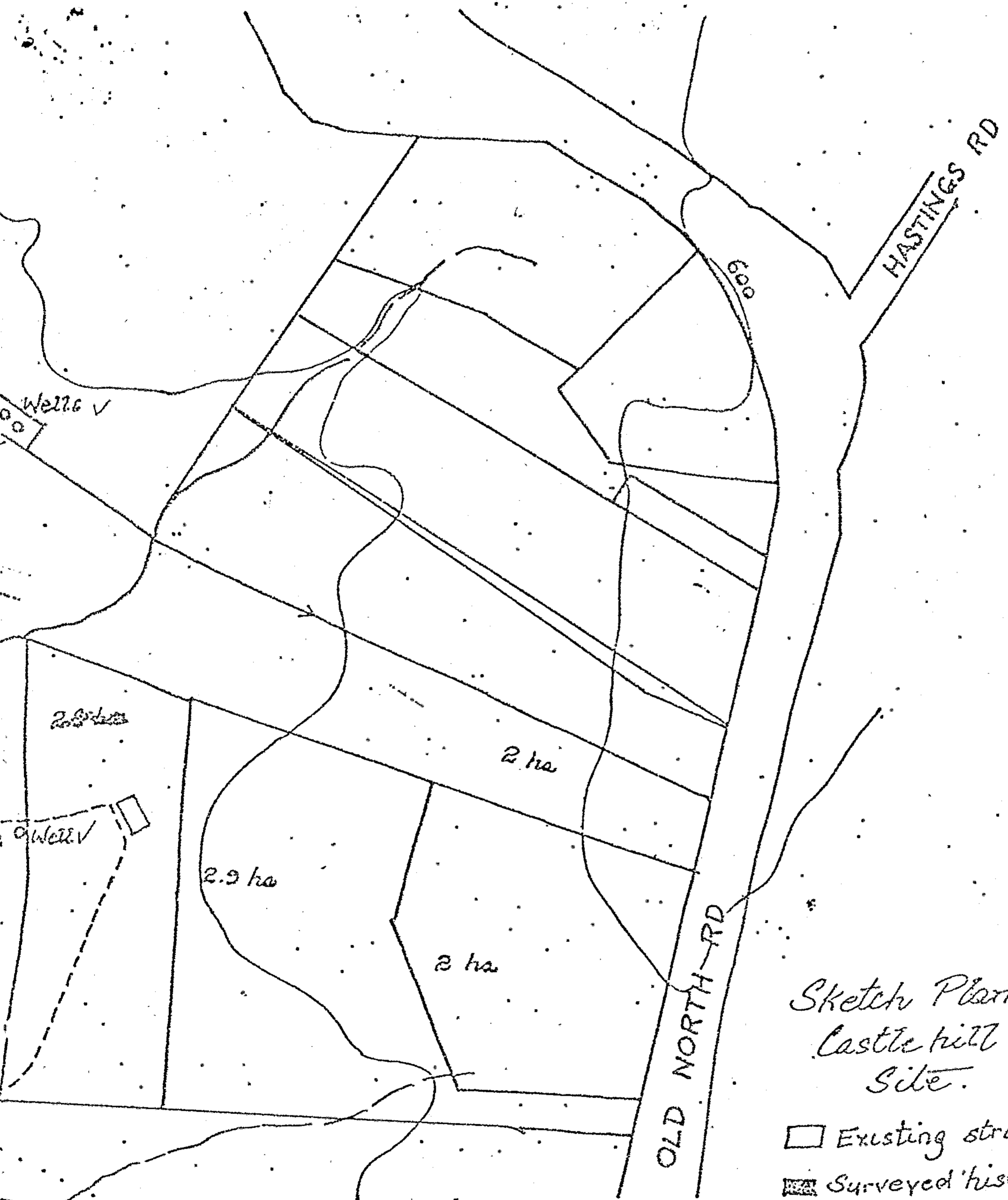
Site 10

Site 14  
lost in  
subdivision

OLD

CASTLE

HILL



*Sketch Plan of  
Castle Hill  
Site.*

- Existing structures
- Surveyed historic sites
- Historic Site conjectural location

COMMEMORATIVE PARK

PREPARED FROM INFORMATION AND RECORDS  
SUPPLIED BY THE BAULKHAM HILLS SHIRE  
COUNCIL FOR THE HILLS DISTRICT  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CASTLE HILL.