

Item Details

Name

St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church (former) & Cemetery

SHR/LEP/S170

SHR #00037

Address

Ponds Road PROSPECT NSW 2148

Local Govt Area

Blacktown

Local Aboriginal Land Council

Deerubbin



Item Type

Complex / Group

Group/Collection

Religion

Category

Church

All Addresses

Addresses

Records Retrieved: 3

Street No	Street Name	Suburb/Town/Postcode	Local Govt. Area	LALC	Parish	County	Electorate	Address Type
	Thornley Road	PROSPECT/NSW/2148	Blacktown	Unknown			PROSPECT	Alternate Address
	Prospect Highway	PROSPECT/NSW/2148	Blacktown	Unknown	Prospect	Cumberland	PROSPECT	Alternate Address
	Ponds Road	PROSPECT/NSW/2148	Blacktown	Deerubbin	Prospect	Cumberland	PROSPECT	Primary Address

Significance

Statement Of Significance

The St Bartholomew's site is closely linked with the development and history of the surrounding area and contains the graves of a considerable number of prominent families from the area since the 1840s. The church is unusually styled for its period and the graveyard is one of the earliest in western Sydney. St. Bartholomew's remains a dominant landmark in the surrounding landscape due to its prominent siting, striking design and mature tree plantings (Historic Buildings Group, 1991, 8; Heritage Group, 1994, 100).

Criteria a)

Historical Significance

The cemetery contains the graves of a number of prominent families and individuals from the founders of the community, including the Lawsons of Veteran Hall (Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth) and the Westons, through to the more recent sporting fame of the Heckenbergs. It demonstrates important family lineages across its entire site from the earliest settlers to their more recent descendents, such as the Leabon and Pond families. (Heritage Group 1994: 100)

The church is an unusually detailed and planned church. The division of the east end into three separately roofed compartments may be the only extant example in NSW of this design. It therefore occupies a special position in the architectural evolution of churches in NSW.

The church hall provides an element associated with the construction of Prospect Reservoir, a major engineering achievement within the district. (Historic Buildings Group 1991:8)

Criteria c)

Aesthetic/Technical Significance

The site is an important surviving fragment of nineteenth century cultural landscape; an historic icon; a virtual oasis, and de-facto public heritage green space, in a once notable rural area now surrounded by the effects of rapid urban, industrial and commercial development. It reflects a visual continuity between 19th and 20th century society. This may be seen not only in the chronological continuity of family burials, but also dramatically in the direct accomodation of power transmission towers, the F4 tollway, the modern Great Western Highway route and the first Great Western Highway route. (Heritage Group 1994: 100)

Criteria d)

Social/Cultural Significance

The church is a building closely linked with the development and early history of the district. (Historic Buildings Group 1991: 8)

Criteria e)

Research Potential

The church is an extant example of an 1840s church, providing evidence of the Church Act. (Historic Buildings Group 1991: 8)

Integrity/Intactness

Some elements have been removed for their protection and preservation. There are some problems invloved in reinstating them.

Owners

Records Retrieved: 0

Organisation	Stakeholder Category	Date Ownership Updated
No Results Found		

Description

Designer

Henry Robertson

Builder/Maker

James Atkinson

Physical Description

Updated

Site:

St Bartholomew's stands on the hill for which the district is famous - Prospect Hill. It is a conspicuous landmark from which there are fine views from to the Blue Mountains and the City of Sydney. Several mature trees including Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), arborvitae (*Thuja* species), coral trees (*Erythrina* species, possibly *E.indica*), Moreton Bay figs (*Ficus macrophylla*), gums (*Eucalyptus* spp.), and Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*), and African olive (*Olea europaea* var. *africana*) clumps are found alongside the fence at either side of the entrance gates to the church. Remnants of early post and rail fencing and entrance gateposts are also found. Lower plantings include variegated century plant (*Agave americana* 'Variegata')(Plant notes by Stuart Read, 2002).

The church is surrounded by a graveyard laid out in a grid pattern. It contains sandstone headstones and columns and small headstones in marble and granite, many originally bordered by cast iron surrounds.

Church:

The building is a plain, rectangular brick structure built on an east/west axis comprising nave, chancel and vestries with a tower at the west end. The tower has a square base with an octagonal belfry. It is of Georgian style. The belfry roof timbers carry a timber bell supporting frame although no bell is in place. The roof over the chancel and vestries is separate from the main roof over the nave. The entrance to the building is through the tower. There are also entrances to the vestries from the exterior.

The external walls are modelled by flat pilasters and finely moulded stone entablatures carried on carved stone modillion brackets, rectangular openings and blind windows. The hipped roof, originally shingled, is now clad with corrugated steel.

The interior joinery was finely moulded cedar and the interior walls plastered and painted. Each vestry had a fireplace but the chimneys and mantelpieces have now been removed. The floors are timber. The chancel floor, originally one step above the main floor, has been raised further and a rectangular projecting dais into the main hall added. There is also a small dais in the north western corner of the church on which a font was once placed.

Church Hall:

The church hall, relocated from its original location in Wetherill Park in 1908, is a one-storey, rectangular building. The exterior walls are corrugated iron over timber framing and the interior walls are timber boarded. The roof is corrugated steel over timber rafters with metal rods. The hall is on a brick base and may have been a prefabricated building.
(Historic Buildings Group 1991: 5-6)

Physical Condition

Updated 08/09/2005

Physical Condition - Good to Excellent

Modifications And Dates

1858 - Repairs to ceiling of the church, covering the original plaster ceiling with fabric.

1880s - Stone tablet placed above entrance door bearing the date 1842.

1887 - Church ceiling covered with timber.

c.1970 - Reroofing with corrugated iron.

1907 - Repairs and ceiling covered with pressed metal.

c1912 - Chancel floor raised by the addition of a new floor over the existing one.

Dais added.

1940s - Stone tablet above entrance door altered to read 1841.

c.1950 - Timber roof framing in church reconstructed.

1950 - Metal ceiling refixed after removal of previous ceilings.

1970 - Brick base of hall renewed.

1977 - Doors and Windows removed from church and replaced with 3mm steel plate.

1989 - Fire destroyed much of the contents of the church and severely damaged the roof.

1991 - Work commenced to repair roof and brickwork damaged by the fire (Historic Buildings Group 1991: 3-4)

? security fencing erected around church and inner part of cemetery after the fire.

2000-2001 - Church completely restored with use of Federation Funding.

Further Comments

Current Use

church, cemetery, functions

Former Use

church, cemetery

Listings

Listings

Records Retrieved: 6					
Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number	Gazette Date	Gazette Number	Gazette Page
Local Environmental Plan		00037	1/3/1992 12:00:00 AM	28	0714
Local Environmental Plan			5/7/1993 12:00:00 AM		
Local Environmental Plan			1/28/1994 12:00:00 AM		
Register of the National Estate			3/21/1978 12:00:00 AM		
Heritage Act - State Heritage Register		00037	4/2/1999 12:00:00 AM	27	1546
Heritage Act - Permanent Conservation Order - former		00037	2/19/1982 12:00:00 AM	28	0714

Procedures/Exemptions

Records Retrieved: 1

Section of Act	Description	Title	Comments	Action Date	Outcome
57(2)	Exemption to allow work	Standard Exemptions		11/9/2020 12:00:00 AM	

History

Historical Notes or Provenance

Updated

Aboriginal & European settler history:

The area of Prospect Reservoir is an area of known Aboriginal occupation, with favourable camping locations along the Eastern Creek and Prospect Creek catchments, and in elevated landscapes to the south. There is also evidence to suggest that the occupation of these lands continued after European contact, through discovery of intermingled glass and stone flakes in archaeological surveys of the place. The area was settled by Europeans by 1789.

Prospect Hill, Sydney's largest body of igneous rock, lies centrally in the Cumberland Plain and dominates the landscape of the area (Ashton, 2000). Very early after first settlement, on 26 April 1788, an exploration party heading west led by Governor Phillip, climbed Prospect Hill. An account by Phillip states that the exploration party saw from Prospect Hill, 'for the first time since we landed Carmathen Hills (Blue Mountains) as likewise the hills to the southward'. Phillip's 'Bellevue' (Prospect Hill) acquired considerable significance for the new settlers. Prospect Hill provided a point from which distances could be meaningfully calculated, and became a major reference point for other early explorers (Karskens 1991). When Watkin Tench made another official journey to the west in 1789, he began his journey with reference to Prospect Hill, which commanded a view of the great chain of mountains to the west. A runaway convict, George Bruce, used Prospect Hill as a hideaway from soldiers in the mid-1790's.

During the initial struggling years of European settlement in NSW, Governor Phillip began to settle time-expired convicts on the land as farmers, after the success of James Ruse at Rose Hill (Higginbotham 2000). On 18 July 1791 Phillip placed a number of men on the eastern and southern slopes of Prospect Hill, as the soils weathered from the basalt cap were richer than the sandstone derived soils of the Cumberland Plain. The grants, mostly 30 acres, encircled Prospect Hill (Ashton 2000). The settlers included William Butler, James Castle, Samuel Griffiths, John Herbert, George Lisk, Joseph Morley, John Nicols, William Parish and Edward Pugh (Higginbotham 2000).

The arrival of the first settlers prompted the first organised Aboriginal resistance to the spread of settlement, with the commencement of a violent frontier conflict in which Pemulwuy and his Bidjigal clan played a central role (Flynn 1997). On 1 May 1801 Governor King took drastic action, issuing a public order requiring that Aboriginal people around Parramatta, Prospect Hill and Georges River should be 'driven back from the settlers' habitations by firing at them'. Kings edicts appear to have encouraged a shoot-on-sight attitude whenever any Aboriginal men, women or children appeared (Flynn 1997).

With the death of Pemulwuy, the main resistance leader, in 1802, Aboriginal resistance gradually diminished near Parramatta, although outer areas were still subject to armed hostilities. Prompted by suggestions to the Reverend Marsden by local Prospect Aboriginal groups that a conference should take place 'with a view of opening the way to reconciliation', Marsden promptly organised a meeting near Prospect Hill. (ibid 1997). At the meeting, held on 3 May 1805, local Aboriginal representatives discussed with Marsden ways of ending the restrictions and indiscriminate reprisals inflicted on them by soldiers and settlers in response to atrocities committed by other Aboriginal clans (ibid 1997). The meeting was significant because a group of Aboriginal women and a young free settler at Prospect named John Kennedy acted as intermediaries. The conference led to the end of the conflict for the Aboriginal clans around Parramatta and Prospect (Karskens 1991). This conference at Prospect on Friday 3 May 1805 is a landmark in Aboriginal/European relations. Macquarie's 'Native Feasts' held at Parramatta from 1814 followed the precedent set in 1805. The Sydney Gazette report of the meeting is notable for the absence of the sneering tone that characterised its earlier coverage of Aboriginal matters (ibid 1997).

From its commencement in 1791 with the early settlement of the area, agricultural use of the land continued at Prospect Hill. Much of the land appears to have been cleared by the 1820s and pastoral use of the land was well established by then. When Governor Macquarie paid a visit to the area in 1810, he was favourably impressed by the comfortable conditions that had been created (Pollon & Healy, 1988, 210).

Nelson Lawson, third son of explorer William Lawson (1774-1850), married Honoria Mary Dickinson and before 1837 built "Greystanes House" as their future family home on the western side of Prospect Hill. Lawson had received the land from his father, who had been granted 500 acres here by the illegal government that followed the overthrow of Governor Bligh in 1808.

Governor Macquarie confirmed the grant, where William Lawson had built a house, which he called "Veteran Hall", because he had a commission in the NSW Veterans Company. The house was demolished in 1928 and the site is now partly covered by the waters of Prospect Reservoir. Greystanes was approached by a long drive lined with an avenue of English trees - elms (*Ulmus procera*), hawthorns (*Crataegus* sp.), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), and woodbine (*Clematis* sp.) mingling with jacarandas (*J. mimosifolia*). It had a wide, semi-circular front verandah supported by 4 pillars. The foundations were of stone, the roof of slate, and the doors and architraves of heavy red cedar. It was richly furnished with articles of the best quality available and was the scene of many glittering soirees attended by the elite of the colony. Honoria Lawson died in 1845, Nelson remarried a year later, but died in 1849, and the property reverted to his father. Greystanes house was demolished in the 1940s (Pollon, 1988, 116, amended Read, S., 2006 - the house can't have been 'on the crest' of Prospect Hill as Pollon states, if its site was covered by the Reservoir).

By the 1870s, with the collapse of the production of cereal grains across the Cumberland Plain, the Prospect Hill area appears to have largely been devoted to livestock. The dwellings of the earliest settlers largely appear to have been removed by this stage. By the time that any mapping was undertaken in this vicinity, most of these structures had disappeared, making their locations difficult to pinpoint (Higginbotham, 2000).

The land was farmed from 1806-1888 when the Prospect Reservoir was built. In 1867, the Governor of NSW appointed a Commission to recommend a scheme for Sydney's water supply, and by 1869 it was recommended that construction commence on the Upper Nepean Scheme. This consisted of two diversion weirs, located at Pheasant's Nest and Broughton's Pass, in the Upper Nepean River catchment, with water feeding into a series of tunnels, canals and aqueducts known as the Upper Canal. It was intended that water be fed by gravity from the catchment into a reservoir at Prospect. This scheme was to be Sydney's fourth water supply system, following the Tank Stream, Busby's Bore and the Botany (Lachlan) Swamps.

Designed and constructed by the Public Works Department of NSW, Prospect Reservoir was built during the 1880s and completed in 1888. Credit for the Upper Nepean Scheme is largely given to Edward Orpen Moriarty, the Engineer in Chief of the Harbours and Rivers Branch of the Public Works Department from 1858-88 (B Cubed Sustainability, 2005, 7).

St. Bartholemew's Church:

Prior to 1836 the building of churches in New South Wales had been a haphazard responsibility of the government. In 1836 the Church Act came into force to promote the building of churches and chapels and provide for the maintenance of Ministers of Religion. The Act immediately led to a spate of church building.

St. Bartholemew's Church of England was built by pioneers of Prospect with funds collected from 1837 (Pollon & Healy, 1988, 210).

In August 1838 tenders were called for the construction of St Bartholomew's Church. The contract was won by James Atkinson of Mulgoa who was building three other churches at the same time: St Peter's at Richmond, St Mary Magdalene at St Mary's and St Thomas' at Mulgoa. His contract was with the trustees, William Lawson, Robert Crawford and Nelson Simmons Lawson. The original contract sum for the building was 1250 pounds, half of which was borne by private subscription and half by the Colonial Treasury. Henry Robertson is

thought to have been the architect for the building although it is highly possible that William Lawson, a surveyor by training, was designer of the church (Historic Buildings Group, 1991,2-3).

Lawson (1774-1850) who crossed the Blue Mountains with Gregory Blaxland and W.C.Wentworth in 1813, lived in a house in Prospect called Veteran Hall (Lawson was a lieutenant in the NSW Veterans' Company, hence the name). Built in 1810 as a small cottage, it was extended to a forty-room mansion in 1822. Lawson's descendents continued to improve the house until the 1880s. It was demolished in 1926 and its site is now within the Prospect Reservoir grounds. Lawson married Sarah Leadbeater on Norfolk Island while serving there and they had 11 children between 1803 and 1826. William Lawson was buried on 16 June 1850. One of their daughters, Sophia, was born at Prospect, and when she died in 1906, was the last surviving child. The family vault at St.Bartholemew's shelters the remains of several members of this large family (Pollon & Healy, 1988, 210).

In April/May 1841 the church and cemetery were consecrated. The earliest burials, on 18 July 1841, were Ann and Margaret Goodin, the 25 and 9 year old daughters of early settlers James and Ann Goodin.

The first minutes of the vestry meeting are dated 1842 and refer to the opening of the parish registers by the Rev.H.H.Bobart, who was the rector of St.John's, Parramatta (Pollon & Healy, 1988, 210).

By 1891 over 360 burials had been recorded in the Parish Register. From the turn of the century to 1941 there was a substantial increase in the annual number of burials, reflecting the development of the district with the subdivision of farms into suburban allotments, the encroaching metropolitan area and the industrial development with the development of metal quarries, saw mills, brick and tile works and Bonds cotton spinning mills. Burials are now only permitted in previously purchased plots, the sale of which were discontinued in 1992 and in existing graves where there is space. Two burials are permitted in most plots (Heritage Group, 1994,15-16)

The last church service was held on Christmas Eve 1967. A group of citizens interested in preserving the church formed The Prospect Trust in November 1967 under the chairmanship of Robert Brown. In late 1969 Blacktown Municipal Council commenced negotiations with the Church of England Property Trust. A fifty year lease over most of the property was obtained by Council in 1975.

In 1978 \$20 000 was made available from National Estate Funds towards restoration provided the funds be administered by the National Trust.

In 1982 a Permanent Conservation order was placed on the site. A further \$100 000 were allocated for restoration by the Minister for Public Works subject to Blacktown Council meeting this amount on a dollar for dollar basis. Blacktown Council requested the Minister's offer be deferred until Council had negotiated the leasing arrangement into purchase of the building by them or the Department of Environment and Planning.

Fire destroyed much of the contents of the church and severely damaged the roof in November 1989. Parts of the original box pews and joinery, an 1850s organ brought to St Bartholomew's in 1888, a pulpit and lecterns from 1908 and all pressed metal ceilings were lost.

In 1991 work commenced to repair the roof and brickwork damaged by the fire (Historic Buildings Group, 1991: 3-4)

From 2000 to 2001 the Church was completely restored, including interiors and windows with the use of Federation funding.

2004 Energy Australia National Trust Heritage Award recieved.

Historic Themes

Records Retrieved: 6

National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
8. Culture	Religion	Practising Anglicanism
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Vernacular towns serving a specific industry
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Role of Transport in Settlement
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Changing land uses - from rural to suburban
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Alienating Crown Lands for religious purposes
3. Economy	Environment - cultural landscape	Landscapes and countryside of rural charm

Recommended Management

Management Summary

A sympathetic and appropriate use of the church and curtilage should be secured that will not compromise the site. (Heritage Group 1994: 101).

Investigate laying of power etc cables underground (Morris & Britton, 2000).

Management

Records Retrieved: 3

Management Category	Management Name	Date Updated
		2/7/2024 6:05:08 PM
		2/7/2024 6:05:08 PM
		2/7/2024 6:05:08 PM

Report/Study

Heritage Studies

Records Retrieved: 3

Report/Study Name	Report/Study Code	Report/Study Type	Report/Study Year	Organisation	Author
Colonial Landscapes of the Cumberland Plain and Camden, NSW			2000		Geoffrey Britton and Colleen Morris for the NSW National Trust
Colonial Landscapes of the Cumberland Plain and Camden, NSW			2000		Morris, C., & Britton, G./NSW National Trust (for the Heritage Council of NSW)
Colonial Landscapes of the Cumberland Plain and Camden, NSW			2000		NSW Heritage Office

Reference & Internet Links

References

Records Retrieved: 6

Type	Author	Year	Title	Link
Written	Prospect Aquatic Investments Ltd.	2010	Wet n Wild Sydney - Preliminary Environment Assessment Report	
Management Plan	Tanner Architects	2004	Masterplan: St Bartholomew's Church and Cemetery, St Bartholomew's Historic Site Prospect	
Written	Graham Edds & Associates Date:	2003	Conservation of family vault of William Lawson St Bartholomew's Church, Prospect NSW	
Written	Heritage Group, State Projects. A Division of NSW Public Works.	1994	St Bartholomew's Anglican Cemetery. Prospect	
Written	Historic Buildings Group, Environmental Design Section, Public Works Department	1991	St Bartholomew's Church, Prospect: a conservation management plan	
Written	Pollen, F. & Healy, G.	1988	Prospect entry in 'The Book of Sydney Suburbs'	

Data Source

The information for this entry comes from the following source:

Data Source	Record Owner	Heritage Item ID
Heritage NSW	Heritage NSW	5045521

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