

Item Details

Name

Veteran Hall - House Remains

SHR/LEP/S170

SHR #01351

Address

Great Western Highway PROSPECT NSW 2148

Local Govt Area

Blacktown

Local Aboriginal Land Council

Deerubbin



Item Type

Archaeological-Terrestrial

Group/Collection

Farming and Grazing

Category

Homestead Complex

All Addresses

Addresses

Records Retrieved: 1

Street No	Street Name	Suburb/Town/Postcode	Local Govt. Area	LALC	Parish	County	Electorate	Address Type
	Great Western Highway	PROSPECT/NSW/2148	Blacktown	Deerubbin			PROSPECT	Primary Address

Significance

Statement Of Significance

The Veteran Hall archaeological remains are associated with the explorer and statesman, William Lawson, who built the first substantial house on the site. The remains can potentially provide insights into settlement in the area and 19th century pastoralism, due to their intactness. The site has the potential to yield information about the second occupants of the site, the Metropolitan Water Supply Board, who occupied the site during the early phases of the Upper Nepean Scheme until the early years of the 20th century, when the Military took it over. The remains make a positive contribution to the landscape and relate harmoniously to the visual catchment of the Prospect Reservoir curtilage.

Criteria a)

Historical Significance

Veteran Hall and its surrounds are associated with the explorer and statesman, William Lawson, who built the first substantial house on the site. The historical landscape around the house remains, including plantings, fences and access road provide important insight into the former landscape of the historical property.

Criteria c)

Aesthetic/Technical Significance

The remains make a positive contribution to the landscape and relate harmoniously to the visual catchment of the Prospect Reservoir curtilage.

Criteria e)

Research Potential

The remains of the house, outbuildings and well can provide archaeological evidence relating to the living and working conditions on the property, when it was a large pastoral establishment, through to its later occupation by the MWS&DB and final military use.

Criteria f)

Rarity

The archaeological remains of the house provide a rare opportunity to investigate the house and landholdings of a prominent and important historical figure.

Owners

Records Retrieved: 0

Organisation	Stakeholder Category	Date Ownership Updated
No Results Found		

Description

Designer

Builder/Maker

William Lawson

Physical Description

Updated

Site:

The homestead site is marked by wall footings and scattered sandstock bricks. An avenue of mature *Araucaria cunninghamii* (hoop pines) and *A.bidwillii* (Bunya Pines) leads to the house site.

Other established plantings in the vicinity include wild or African olive (*Olea europaea var.cuspidata*), and a former *Pyracantha* (firethorn) hedge. A Macartney rose (*Rosa bracteata*) is in the homestead garden. The same species of rose is also found in the King family farm garden at St. Marys (Kaiser-Glass, pers.comm., 25/11/2015).

Ancillary elements associated with the house site include cellars (filled) and a well discovered near the Prospect Hill Reservoir access road.

A memorial cairn constructed of bricks from the house and erected in 1970, and several explanatory signs attached to an old style timber post and rail fence now also indicate the presence of the house site. The bronze plaque provided by the Macquarie Historical Society reads as follows, "This cairn marks the site of Veteran Hall, the home of explorer William Lawson and commemorates his life and achievements. Erected 1970". Recent works near the access road to Prospect Hill reservoir have uncovered a 25.5meter well approximately 182 metres from the site of Veteran Hall. It is 2 metres across, lined with sandstock bricks and contains 7.5 metre deep water.

Physical Condition

Updated

Modifications And Dates

Archaeological site.

c1810 Macquarie confirmed grant to William Lawson (500 acres), WL built Veteran Hall

c1821 main Veteran Hall homestead either replacing or enlarging original c.1810 house - a large, single-storey building in typical Colonial Georgian style, approximately 65 squares in size, which expanded to a size of approximately 110 squares including verandahs. It was owned and occupied by William between 1810 and 1850

pre 1837 Nelson Lawson built "Greystanes House" on the western side of Prospect Hill. 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.

1880s property resumed for construction of Prospect Reservoir

1888-1912 Veteran Hall became the residence and local office of the Water Board's Engineer-In-Charge of Headworks

1912-15 Veteran Hall homestead leased with surrounding paddocks to the Commonwealth military authorities as a remount depot. The building then became vacant

1929 Veteran Hall homestead demolished. Several of the decorative fittings and architectural details, such as quoins, were donated to the Vaucluse House Trust and some of Lawson's descendants.

Greystanes house 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*).

1940s Greystanes house was demolished

Further Comments

Prospect Reservoir

Current Use

undergoing change to public recreation land (part) and industrial uses (majority)

Former Use

farming land; quarry

Listings

Listings

			Records Retrieved: 3		
Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number	Gazette Date	Gazette Number	Gazette Page
Heritage Act - s.170 NSW State agency heritage register		495151			
National Trust of Australia register					
Heritage Act - State Heritage Register		01351	11/18/1999 12:00:00 AM		

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

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-1790s.

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).

Veteran Hall & Greystanes: The Lawson Family:

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 had 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 main homestead was erected in about 1821 and either replaced or was an enlargement of Lawson's first house, which was built on the same site around 1810. It was a large, single-storey building in typical Colonial Georgian style, approximately 65 squares in size, which expanded to a size of approximately 110 squares including verandahs. It was owned and occupied by William between 1810 and 1850.

The property was resumed during the 1880s for construction of Prospect Reservoir and Veteran Hall became the residence and local office of the Water Board's Engineer-In-Charge of Headworks from 1888 until 1912, when the position was moved to Potts Hill. The homestead was then leased with the surrounding paddocks to the Commonwealth military authorities until 1915 as a remount depot. The building then became vacant and was demolished in 1929. Several of the decorative fittings and architectural details, such as the quoins, were donated to the Vaucluse House Trust and some of Lawson's descendants. William Lawson, a key figure in Australian history, died at Veteran Hall in 1850, and was buried at nearby St.Bartholomew's Church.

Greystanes house 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.

Prospect Reservoir:

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).

Historic Themes

Records Retrieved: 20

National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
9. Phases of Life	Persons	Associations with Lt. William Lawson, explorer, Commandant of Govt.Stores, grazier
5. Working	Labour	Working in industrial complexes
5. Working	Labour	Working on pastoral stations
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Rural orchards
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Role of Transport in Settlement
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Developing suburbia
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Creating landmark structures and places in regional settings
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Country Estate
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Changing land uses - from rural to suburban
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Sub-division of large estates
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Selecting land for pastoral or agricultural purposes
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Naming places (toponymy)
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Granting Crown lands for private farming
4. Settlement	Land tenure	Expressing lines of early grant allotments
4. Settlement	Accommodation	Unknown
3. Economy	Exploration	Unknown
3. Economy	Environment - cultural landscape	Landscapes of industrial production
3. Economy	Environment - cultural landscape	Landscapes of food production
3. Economy	Agriculture	Clearing land for farming
3. Economy	Agriculture	Ancillary structures - wells, cisterns

Recommended Management

Management Summary

Not followed up in study (Morris and 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: 10

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
Holroyd Heritage Study Review			1998		Graham Brooks and Associates
Sydney Water Heritage Study			1996		Graham Brooks & Associates
Sydney Water Heritage Study			1996		Graham Brooks and Associates Pty Ltd
Sydney Water Heritage Study			1996		Graham Brooks & Associates Pty Ltd
Sydney Water Heritage Study			1996		Graham Brooks and Associates Pty Ltd
Holroyd Heritage Study			1993		Neustein & Associates
Holroyd Heritage Study			1993		Neustein & Associates and Jyoti Somerville

Reference & Internet Links

References

Records Retrieved: 2

Type	Author	Year	Title	Link
Written	Beasley, M.	1988	By the sweat of their brows - 100 years of the Sydney Water Board 1888-1988	
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	5051453

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