The report of the archaeological monitoring of earthworks for relics of heritage significance

Watermain in
Gordon Street
Port Macquarie, NSW

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MAY 2000

for
Hastings Council
This report has been compiled in 'plain English', but presented in a format suitable for developing policies for the management of the cultural resources, and as a basis for scientific reference in future research studies.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is of the monitoring of earthworks performed by the Works Division, Hastings Council, for the construction of a watermain in Gordon Street, Port Macquarie.

The report is required to comply with Excavation Permit -2000/S140/016 Gordon Street, Port Macquarie issued to Hastings Council, and dated 30/3/00 - see the appendix.

In February 2000 I was contracted by Hastings Council to assess the heritage potential of a proposed watermain route along Gordon Street (Appleton, 2000). In my assessment I concluded that while it is it was unlikely that there were any surviving relics or remains of heritage significance along the line of the proposed watermain, it was in the vicinity of features of known heritage significance, and there was some potential for the works to create a public expectation that adequate precautions should be taken to protect the heritage sites.

The recommendation was to monitor a 95 metre section of the earthworks immediately opposite the cemetery.

Excavation of the trench exposed only two features. These consisted of the ‘stumps’ of two vertical pieces of timber, approximately two metres apart midway along the trench. Neither piece of timber was of sufficiently identifiable heritage significance to warrant preservation or conservation.

At the conclusion of the excavation of the 95 metre section to be monitored I concluded that it was unnecessary to monitor the excavations any further. Accordingly, I advised the client that the monitoring was complete.
1 BACKGROUND

This report is of the monitoring of earthworks performed by the Works Division, Hastings Council, for the construction of a watermain in Gordon Street, Port Macquarie.

The report is required to comply with Excavation Permit -2000/S140/016 Gordon Street, Port Macquarie issued to Hastings Council, and dated 30/3/00 - see the appendix.

In 1994, the Hastings Shire Council commissioned Higginbotham and Associates to investigate and assess the heritage significance of Port Macquarie and to design an Archaeological Management Plan. As a consequence, Higginbotham identified a number of areas of potential heritage significance, and the cemetery and Gordon Street, were two of many sites and buildings listed in ‘Volume 2: Inventory’, accompanying the report of his assessment. See the Inventory Plan in the appendix.

In his assessment Higginbotham stated that the causeway or ‘Dam’ was built by convict labour in about 1840. He stated that The Cutting, or The Cut, was completed in 1843, and was the last major public work executed with convict labour. The excavated material was used as land fill in the construction of the Kooloonbung Creek Dam. Higginbotham suggested that the Cutting may later have been widened. Higginbotham also recorded the Historic Cemetery in Gordon Street as the Old Graveyard.

Higginbotham's assessment of the Heritage Significance for each of the sites was as follows

- The site(s) possesses historical or archaeological significance, because it may reveal evidence relating to:
  i) The early 19th century development of the town (Rare, Regional)
  ii) The nature of convict labour or public works undertaken by convict labour (Rare, State).

In his recommendations Higginbotham proposed that clause 46 of the Hastings Local Environment Plan 1987 (LEP 87) should be amended to provide for the inclusion of special

2. ibid., Volume 2: Inventory
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conservation areas to provide for ‘... more meaningful conservation and interpretation’.

Among the provisions proposed by Higinbotham were:

- A provision that all demolition, excavation and new buildings in the area requires development consent,

- a requirement that any development be assessed in terms of its likely impact on the site’s ability to demonstrate its heritage significance.

In February 2000 I was contracted by Hastings Council to assess the heritage potential of a proposed watermain route along Gordon Street (Appleton, 2000). In my assessment I concluded that while it is it was unlikely that there were any surviving relics or remains of heritage significance along the line of the proposed watermain, it was in the vicinity of features of known heritage significance, and there was some potential for the works to create a public expectation that adequate precautions should be taken to protect the heritage sites. If the earthworks were not monitored and something of significance was exposed, or someone later proffered information, false or otherwise, that a site of significance had been destroyed the system would be perceived to be flawed. This would create problems for any future developments in other potentially sensitive areas and would deter developers from following the correct procedures.

The recommendation was to monitor a 95 metre section of the earthworks immediately opposite the cemetery.

Figures on the following pages show a map of the Port Macquarie area, and a street plan showing the alignment of the watermain, and the section to be monitored.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The earthworks consisted of the laying of 196 metres of watermain within the existing Gordon Street road easement, between a connection point opposite the junction with Hay Street, and a second connection point approximately 75 metres west of the midpoint of the junction of Gordon Street and Horton Street.

3. ibid., pp.20-21.
Figure 1 - Topographical map of the general area - the arrow indicates the site.
Figure 2 - Plan of the earthworks for the watermain (purple line), the section subject to monitoring (red line), and the approximate location of the two posts (green dots).
3 THE SITE WORKS

The siteworks comprised of two stages.

- The prior removal of all pavers along the section to be monitored (to reduce my time on site),

- The mechanical excavation of a 600 mm wide by 900 mm deep trench, in a series of six metre sections, the installation of a six metre length of 300 mm pipe, and the backfilling of each section of trench before commencing excavation of the next section (to reduce the impact of the earthworks on traffic flow).

Of the two stages only the second required monitoring.

4 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

4.1 Non-indigenous (heritage) relics

Excavation of the trench exposed only two features. These consisted of the ‘stumps’ of two vertical pieces of timber, approximately two metres apart midway along the trench. The larger of the two pieces was approximately 120 cm long, and the other was approximately 60 cm long. Both pieces of timber were undressed, split, half-logs. Neither piece exhibited any other unnatural characteristics.

Neither piece of timber was of sufficiently identifiable heritage significance to warrant preservation or conservation. Their locations are shown on Figure 2.

The photographic record on the following pages show various aspects of the earthworks, and the two timber features.
Figure 3 - The watermain route after prior removal of the pavers

Figure 4 - Excavation in progress
Figure 5 - B Horizon soils typical of the eastern end of the monitored section.

Figure 6 - Heavy volcanic clays in the mid section.
Figure 7 - Bedrock exposed to the west of midway

Figure 8 - Bedrock in the western section
Figure 9 - The eastern (larger) timber feature in situ.

Figure 10 - The western timber feature in situ.
Figure 11 - The outer face of the larger timber feature. Base towards the left. (scale 1 metre)

Figure 12 - The inner face of the larger timber feature. Base towards the left.
4.2 Indigenous artefactual material

No archaeological material of Indigenous origin was observed.

5. INTERPRETATION

My interpretation of the two pieces of timber were that they were both either fence posts, or, more likely, that they are all that remain of the original gateway into the cemetery, as they occur midway along the apparent frontage of the cemetery.

As predicted in the assessment no artefactual material of heritage significance was unearthed. This was not surprising as the construction of the cutting would have required the removal rather than the deposition of material. While it was possible that discarded or misplaced excavation tools may have been discovered, it was unlikely that skeletal material, grave goods, or graveyard furniture would have been so low in the cutting, when the nearest known grave was some 40 metres distant, and at least ten metres above pavement level.

In fact, when the pavers were removed it was found that they had been bedded on a very shallow bed of gravel, which had been laid directly onto B Horizon soils.

6. CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the excavation of the 95 metre section to be monitored I concluded that it was unnecessary to monitor the excavations any further. Accordingly, I advised the client that the monitoring was complete.
GENERAL GLOSSARY: The definitions that follow are for terms used by the author, and do not necessarily apply to their use by others in different contexts.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSIT: Sediments which contain evidence of past use of the place.

ARTEFACT: Any object that has attributes as a consequence of human activity (Dunnell 1971).

BATTER: To shape and cut back a vertical earthen face to a regular slope (pers. comm. R. Bell, Uralla Shire Council).


‘Blue and white transfer-printed ware’: Pottery and porcelain produced for domestic use during the late 18th to mid-19th centuries, in a number of factories in the British Isles. The decoration was inexpensively produced using underglaze blur transfer prints taken from engraved copper plates and needed only one firing (Gleeson 1997; 78-9. See also Feild, 1998; 124-5)

DENDROCHRONOLOGY: A chronometric dating technique in which series of tree growth rings are matched against an established and dated sequence of growth rings for hundreds or thousands or years.

FROGS: see following page

GRAIN SIZE: Very coarse sand 1.0 - 2.0mm

Coarse sand 1/2 - 1.0mm

Medium sand 1/4 - 1/2mm

Fine sand 1/8 - 1/4mm

Very fine sand 1/16 - 1/8mm

Silt < 1/16mm

In situ: In its original place - as deposited.

LIME MORTAR: Lime mortar was made using approximately 1 part lime with 3 parts sand in water (Jackson & Day, 1998; 29). Lime was obtained by crushing and burning seashells.

SITE: A discrete area or concentration of artefactual material.
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<th>STONE SIZE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Pebbles</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


For further reference see:


APPENDIX