

## Community Based Shire Wide

## Heritage Study 2004



Looking north along Rouse Street from the Manners Street intersection with Melbourne House & Exchange Hotel on near left, School of Arts & Post Office on near right. (1935).

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Acquittal report by project co-ordinator Ken Halliday, Wednesday February 9, 2005.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

- a) A thematic history for the Tenterfield Shire
- b) Completion of a community based heritage study of the Tenterfield Shire Local Government Area
- b) A comprehensive list of 58 community nominated heritage places/items and management strategies
- c) Documented local historical knowledge across the Shire before it is lost
- d) Recognition of the importance of the heritage cause being economic development friendly rather than necessarily opposing development
- e) Recommendations to council on places/items to be included in the Local Heritage Register and those for consideration for council's Local Environmental Plan
- f) Comments on heritage places/items and rank on maintenance needs based on the heritage study
- g) Raising community awareness of heritage conservation
- h) Providing council with advice on the management of heritage
- i) Recommending heritage conservation areas for the Central Business precinct, the Railway Station precinct and the Showgrounds. A further recommendation was for Council to be proactive in the creation of a Heritage Conservation Management Plan and restoration funding applications for the Showground.
- j) Council's decision to retain the Heritage Committee in an advisory capacity

The project culminated with the finalisation of a Tenterfield Shire Local Heritage Register detailing a total of 58 accepted community nominations. Of these 24 have been placed on the State Heritage Inventory for consideration by the NSW Heritage Office and recommended for consideration in a review of Tenterfield Council's Local Environmental Plan.

Nominations were assessed in line with a specially prepared Thematic History of the Tenterfield Shire, the Burra Charter and the seven statutory criteria against which heritage items have to be tested – their historic, aesthetic, scientific or social significance, their connection with historical persons or their rarity or representativeness within the local area.

In the assessment process the committee retained its focus on identifying and documenting heritage places/items from the community nominations called for in early 2004.

The committee encouraged the nomination of heritage places/items not already afforded statutory protection by either the State Government or the Tenterfield Shire Council. While recognising statutory listed places/items from the outset, the committee felt it more appropriate for any re-assessment of those places/items to be part of the Local Environmental Plan process that council will be embarking upon shortly.

The committee noted in addition to Council's LEP and the State Heritage Inventory, the following lists of heritage places/items included: one World Heritage listing, 46 National Trust listings, 27 National Estate listings, 21 Royal Institute of Architects' listings and 24 recommended for LEP listing in Suter's Tenterfield Main Street Study (1996). Obviously these included multiples of nominations or listings.

Such a substantial number and coming from such a diverse range of listings, reflects a high degree of heritage interest within the shire. These lists along with the Tenterfield Shire Local Heritage Register provide a level of certainty to owners, developers, administrators and other interested parties. They can ascertain up front whether a place is listed and what are the consequences of that listing, before planning any changes. It can also avoid last minute crises and conflicts.

Several points raised during workshop sessions to assist in the assessment process included:

- a) In a Community Based Heritage Study the assessment process must focus on the community's perspective and away from our personal views of the nominated place/item. In other words, the assessment needs to be based on the knowledge that it has some degree of community backing.

- b) While all nominations were likely to be accepted for recording on the non-statutory Local Heritage Register, those being considered for statutory listings (ie Local Environmental Plan or State Heritage Inventory) should have a use and a purpose. It should be able to 'earn its keep' through means of its present use or an adaptive re-use. Buildings should be living entities not museum pieces.
- c) If there is no physical evidence of a known item of heritage significance, the site will not be included in an assessment beyond being identified and listed on the Local Heritage Register.
- d) Items needing archaeological/flora/fauna assessment will not be included due to economic limitations, however they will be identified and listed on the Local Heritage Register.
- e) In the case of items proving to be physically remote for reasonable access, if information is provided of an acceptable standard, it is possible to include such items in the study without a site visit.
- f) In order to undertake a credible comparative assessment of any heritage item, it is imperative that a reasonable history of the item and others of its type be available. Whilst a documented written history is the most ideal and reliable, it is acceptable to draw upon the oral histories of the local communities.
- g) If an item is less than 50 years of age and is not considered particularly rare under the criteria, such items will generally be excluded.

Success of the project can be largely attributed to the fact that members of the committee have significant experience in voluntary and paid capacities in the management of community committees, project development and implementation.

In early 2004 the Tenterfield Shire Heritage Study Liaison Committee was established by Council under Section 355 of the Local Government Act to facilitate a community based shire wide heritage study. Purpose of the committee was to facilitate and participate in the gathering and evaluation of information in relation to known and possible heritage items within the Shire. Furthermore, the committee was charged with the correlation of the collected and investigated data into a usable document listing the heritage items evaluated during the process and providing council with expert local advice on heritage matters.

The Committee consisted of two Councillors, two Council staff and one representative from the local Aboriginal Land Councils, the Shire Economic Development Corporation, Tenterfield and District Historical Society, the Tenterfield Urban area and the Shire rural area. The latter two were appointed from public nomination or expression of interest. Council appointed the Study Co-ordinator, a position funded by the Council and the NSW Heritage Office, as Committee chairperson.

The committee met monthly throughout the life of the study. It worked attentively on the assumption that environments work better if the people who live, work and play here are actively engaged in its creation and management and not treated as passive consumers.

Success of the committee's endeavours is reflected in Council's decision that the committee will continue in an advisory capacity to:

- i) Assess heritage items subject to the development process
- ii) Assess future heritage nominations
- iii) Assess and input to the Local Heritage Funding process
- iv) Advise Council on other heritage related issues.

Morale of the committee has been boosted by interest in the project by the community especially those keen to rekindle their association with the Shire's heritage and participate in its recording and conservation.

Throughout the project there was evidence of a strong commitment to community participation. Benefits of the project already evident is the strengthening sense of community through commitment and a desire to create opportunities for heritage conservation alongside economic development.

The community nominations reflected a fair representation of Historic Themes outlined in the Thematic History of the Tenterfield Shire which in itself has been a major outcome of the study.

It was researched and written in the early stages of the study by project co-ordinator Ken Halliday to succinctly define the principal events and catalysts that influenced the development of the Tenterfield Shire.

Occupying the Land was the only one of seven adopted local themes that failed to gain any representation. Examples of remaining physical evidence that may exist within the Tenterfield Shire that could best illustrate this theme would probably focus on aboriginal cultures and interaction with other cultures.

The committee considered heritage items representing Aboriginal culture such as sacred sites, bora grounds etc within the Tenterfield Shire recognising that many of these already have statutory protection under provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Services. Generally nominations were not sought for items that already had statutory protection in some form or other.

Seven local themes were developed for the Thematic History to assist in identifying potential heritage places/items of significance for the Tenterfield Shire Local Register, the Local Environmental Plan and also those of state significance that could qualify for listing on the State Heritage Register.

The history was prepared around the seven Local Themes developed to articulate the application of the national historic themes framed by the Australian Heritage Commission and the state historic themes determined by the NSW Heritage Office. The themes used are those that have moulded the people and environment of the Tenterfield Shire into its present day shape.

## **AIMS ACHIEVED**

- 1) Researched and prepared a thematic history for the Tenterfield Shire
- 2) Undertook a study of the Tenterfield Shire Local Government Area
- 3) Compiled a comprehensive list of community nominated heritage places/items and management strategies
- 4) Involved the community in nominating places/items of heritage significance in the Tenterfield Shire which are valued by the community and thought worthy of listing on the Shire Local Heritage Register
- 5) Utilised and documented local historical knowledge across the Shire before it is lost
- 6) Focussed on being economic development friendly rather than necessarily opposing all development
- 7) Maintained a flexible and friendly attitude to development
- 8) Recommended to council places/items to be included in the Local Heritage Register and those for consideration for council's Local Environmental Plan
- 9) Made comment on heritage places/items and rank on maintenance needs based on the heritage study
- 10) Provided council with advice on the management of heritage
- 11) Raised community awareness of heritage conservation
- 12) Consulted with owners of places/items regarding their willingness to have them listed on the local heritage register
- 13) Undertook site visit, where necessary.

The main aim achieved by the thematic history was to succinctly define the principal events and catalysts that influenced the development of the Tenterfield Shire. It strives to reason why the built environment evolved in a particular way.

The most use of the thematic history during the study was in its concise overview that was useful in supporting the nominations of buildings, relics or areas as 'significant heritage' items.

The thematic history created a framework to help determine which items might be historically rare or informative or which commemorated important events or processes. Its framework allowed for items of low aesthetic appeal to be evaluated whereas they may have

been overlooked in a visual survey. It provided an objective means of assessment rather than a subjective reaction.

Of the 38 State Historic Themes, only Fishing and Science were not used as they had no substantial application to the Tenterfield Shire. Within the study area a number of State Themes overlap and were therefore discussed within the context of seven Local Themes, each succinctly encapsulating the major processes in the historical development of the Tenterfield Shire.

Each of the Shire wide stories have been developed under the headings and subheadings of the local, state and national themes, with reference to heritage items that can illustrate each story.

Stories of localities and individuals have not been developed in this project but anyone interested in doing so is encouraged to develop those stories within this context. The Thematic History has many potential future uses and could be especially worthwhile as the basis for an oral history project as proposed during committee deliberations.

Essentially, the success of a Community Based Heritage Study was a result of a well planned community consultation process. To achieve this aim the Tenterfield Shire Council initially distributed heritage questionnaires and nomination forms to every ratepayer.

The purpose of this section of the project was to provide the local community with an opportunity to participate in the Tenterfield Shire Community Heritage Study 2004 and to assist in identifying what is significant to the community.

People were asked to nominate any place, be it a building, property, monument, site, landmark, piece of machinery landscape, ruin, river, bridge, road or track... indeed anything which they might consider worthy of conservation and best illustrate segments of our past.

This community consultation process assisted in identifying what are significant heritage items and places the community would like to preserve for future generations. The list can be expanded as the heritage awareness builds further across the community.

Letters went out to the owners of 60 heritage listed properties in the Tenterfield Shire Local Environmental Plan seeking comment on the listing and any further information about the item which may not yet be part of the public record. Only one reply was received. The owner indicated that he did not wish his property to be a participant in the listing process. This property is also listed on the State Heritage Register and the National Trust register.

Community interest in the preservation of cemeteries and community halls led to the committee considering these as separate entities already being given a reasonable degree of protection by Council's policy to accept such responsibility.

Cemeteries are archives of the Shire's history providing information about certain areas and the life and times of those who lived there. They also give clues to broader concepts like architectural tastes and spiritual philosophy. Cemeteries are an historical record of local communities and in some cases are important records of significance to the whole of Australia.

Recognising the heritage significance of cemeteries, the committee considered expanding the Willsons Downfall cemetery nomination to include general cemeteries at Tenterfield, Bolivia, Boorook, Boonoo Boonoo, Drake, Legume, Maryland, Stanum, Sunnyside, Torrington, Urbenville, White Swamp, private cemeteries at Millera, Bolivia Station, Cooredulla and known lone graves in rural areas.

In light of Council's support and involvement in cemetery recording and preservation, the committee provided a list of cemeteries etc to enhance Council's cemetery register.

The numerous community halls dotted about the Tenterfield Shire were mostly built during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of local initiatives and became an integral part of community life. Of the nine currently still in use, the Steinbrook and Sunnyside Halls were nominated for the Local Heritage Register. However, the committee decided that all existing halls and the sites of those no longer standing would best be provided for in Council's register of Community Halls.

Concerns were raised by the Committee in relation to the demolition of two heritage buildings in Tenterfield during the course of the study. These were the former Lindeman's

cottage at 107 Miles Street (recommended for LEP listing in the Main Street Heritage Study, 1996) and the re-location to a rural area of a 19<sup>th</sup> century house from 28 Douglas Street (believed to have been a coach staging site). Both actions were taken without Council approval or knowledge. An assurance was given the committee that under the Local Government Act 1993, approval is required from local councils before any building or structure can be erected, altered or partly or fully demolished.

Tenterfield Shire Council specifies in its local approvals policy, that it will include consideration of heritage when determining an application to build or demolish. Such a policy demonstrates the esteem the community has for heritage and provides another level of certainty that heritage is given appropriate consideration as part of those application processes.

Throughout the study, concerns for heritage sprang from a desire among the committee members to protect or at least record sites and structures that are regarded by the community as important. These are things we want to conserve and pass on to future generations and included for example:

- Evidence of important aspects of our past
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Important to the social life of our community or
- Particularly rare and interesting.

The committee's work was based on the assumption that environments work better if the people who live, work and play here are actively engaged in its creation and management...not treated as passive consumers.

With the local knowledge of committee members and nominators of heritage places/items and a fresh approach to heritage, there have been some interesting discoveries in this community based process. The study needs to be ongoing to ensure our heritage listings are more inclusive.

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### ***Tenterfield Shire Heritage Study Liaison Committee***

Tenterfield Shire Council Representatives: Crs. John Brown, Lucy Sullivan and John Macnish.

Tenterfield Shire Council staff: General Manager Mark Arnold, Director of Environmental Services Scott Riley (resigned) and David Mitchell, Environmental Administrative Officer David Stewart

Community Rural representative: Laurence West

Community Urban representative: Jean Jarrett

Tenterfield & District Historical Society representative: Margaret de Clara

Tenterfield Economic Development Corporation representative: John Sommerlad

Tenterfield Aboriginal Land Councils representative: David Binge

Co-ordinator and Chairman: Ken Halliday

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-- KEN HALLIDAY: Co-ordinator.