

Item Details

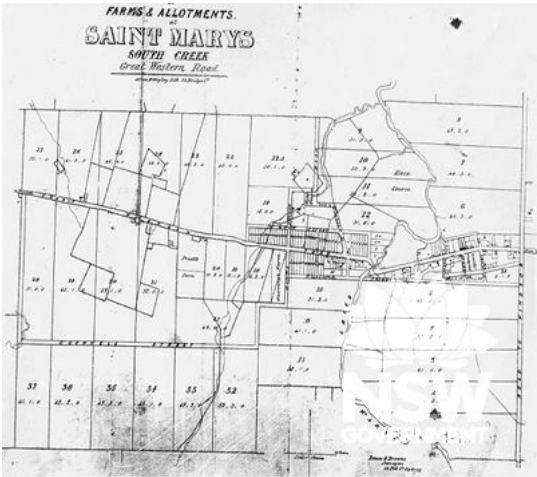
Name
"Margaret Farm", house, barn and tannery site

SHR/LEP/S170
LEP #226

Address
Pages Road, Barker, Wilson and Schleicher Streets ST MARYS NSW 2760

Local Govt Area
Penrith

Local Aboriginal Land Council
Unknown



Item Type	Group/Collection	Category
Built	Manufacturing and Processing	Tannery

All Addresses

Addresses

Records Retrieved: 1

Street No	Street Name	Suburb/Town/Postcode	Local Govt. Area	LALC	Parish	County	Electorate	Address Type
	Pages Road, Barker, Wilson and Schleicher Streets	ST MARYS/NSW/2760	Penrith	Unknown			Unknown	Primary Address

Significance

Statement Of Significance

The site of Margaret Farm and Barn is significant as one of the first developed Tannery sites in the region which was instrumental in the growth, development and consolidation of St Marys during the 19th Century. It was one of the longest serving and continuously occupied industrial sites in St Marys. The site belongs to a phase of expansion in the tanning industry that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century when legislative changes forced this, amongst other noxious industries, away from the metropolitan centre. The site was at one time noted to be one of the largest tanneries in the State. The site is significant for its association with particularly influential figures in the tanning trade and associated industries.

The Barn at Margaret Farm is a significant intact relic of the mid-Victorian tannery development which flourished at St Marys on the Pages Road site between the 1850s and 1911 and is of rare local heritage significance as one of the oldest remaining industrial buildings in the St Marys area.

The barn designed in the Cottage Ornee style demonstrates a high degree of skill as a purpose-designed building that formed part of a larger homestead group.

The site contains a late 19th Century single-storey Italianate house demonstrating the development of wealth and architectural taste associated with the owners of the site.

The site has some potential to contain sub-surface archaeological evidence of buildings and processes related to the tannery which could contribute to knowledge of this important colonial industry that was established as early as 1803 in NSW. The archaeological evidence could contribute additional and detailed evidence for the use and management of this site. This information is largely absent from the surviving documentation. It could also provide a perspective on the industry during the mid-later nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century.

Criteria a)

Historical Significance

The historical significance of the site is largely related to its documentation of the industrial process and secondly its impact on the region and town. Page's Tannery, established in 1856, was one of the first to be located in the St Marys district and by 1872 only five tanners were listed in operation at St Marys, including Saddington and Sons. It was almost continuously occupied until the twentieth century making it one of the longest serving tanneries of St Marys. At various times it was ranked as one of the largest in the district and state. The tannery formed an important component of the industrial profile of St Marys. Industry was the most significant element in the evolution of the town and this particular site provided constant employment for a substantial number of local men and boys. The industry utilized plentiful supplies of timber and water to establish secondary processing of rural produce within the grazing lands on the Cumberland Plain that were progressively cleared west of Sydney. The Barn demonstrates a typical function of 19th Century life relating to the need to house horses and other farm animals used in daily life and in the process of manufacture relating to the tanning industry. It also illustrates the varying uses of the site during its long occupancy as not only stable, but also barn, store house and for manufacturing.

Criteria b)

Historical Association Significance

The site was associated with influential names in the tanning industry and parallel industries. Anschau and Sons were particularly noted for their contribution to the development of a local boot-making industry that successfully challenged the imported product.

Criteria c)

Aesthetic/Technical Significance

The Margaret Farm site has high aesthetic significance for its well detailed remnant structures associated with the original tannery use of the site. The site has retained elements of its original rural setting.

The Barn exhibits a high degree of creative input in its design and execution as a high style example of a service building, and was obviously purpose-designed and built as part of a larger homestead group and reflects cultural and aesthetic values of the second half of the 19th Century. The Barn exhibits technological advances in construction through the use of a galvanised damp proof course. It has a considerable degree of unity in its scale and form and in the use of materials and details.

Criteria d)

Social/Cultural Significance

The Margaret Farm site has high social significance for the role played in the development of the local economy and the colonial tanning industry and in particular for the role it played in local employment.

Criteria e)

Research Potential

The Margaret Farm site has high technical/research significance for its demonstration of mid-Victorian building techniques and for its demonstration of colonial tanning practices and the later Victorian farming practices.

Criteria f)

Rarity

The building is a rare surviving tannery service building from the mid nineteenth century and it occupies a highly significant site relating to the development of the local tanning industry and containing potentially significant archaeological remains.

Criteria g)

Representative

TheBarn is an excellent representative of a tannery service building from the mid nineteenth century. The Tannery site is representative of the location and layout of tanneries in the surrounding area. This site, like others in St Marys, represents part of a tradition of an essential industry established in NSW at least as early as 1803. This site belongs to a phase of expansion in that industry that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Integrity/Intactness

The building is substantially intact, but in poor condition.The building has minor internal alterations and the addition of the cow bails.The site is considerably modified, having lost most of its original built form, but remains substantially rural in character so that the view of the Barn against rural pasture land is retained.

Owners

Records Retrieved: 0		
Organisation	Stakeholder Category	Date Ownership Updated
No Results Found		

Description

Designer	Builder/Maker
None - vernacular	Not known

Physical Description	Updated
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The Margaret Farm Barn is a small purpose designed two-storey gabled brick stable structure with a timber framed loft and corrugated iron roofing laid over the original timber framed and shingled roof. The building has a later single-storey timber framed skillion along the southern face with a corrugated iron roof. The area at the rear of the barn has been fenced to form corrals and cattle runs. The main walls are of high quality salmon coloured brick, carefully gauged in lime mortar and tuckpointed. The roof is pitched at 45 degrees and is simply framed with hardwood rafters and battened with She Oak shingles, still extant under the the later corrugated iron roof sheeting. The gable ends are finished with decorative scalloped barge boards and there is evidence of a central timber finial at the each end of the roof. The building is presently boarded up and fenced off and the immediate grounds are overgrown and rapidly encroaching on the building fabric. This building is located at the end of Pages Road on its south-eastern side. The structure was in existence by 1883, when it is shown on a plan of the site of that date. It was then used as a stables. It is locally referred to as the "old boot-making factory" although the reasons or evidence for this are not evident. It could date to any of the tanneries that occupied the site prior to 1883 viz, Page (1856-1866), Saddington (1866-1879) or Alcock and Davenport (1879-1882). In terms of its style and location it is most likely to date to the period of occupation of Robert Saddington (1866-1879). A timber dairy was built as a lean-to at the rear of this building and this is most likely to relate to the use of the site as a small farm and market garden from 1911 onwards. The Barn originally formed part of a larger group of rural buildings being part of a large homestead complex associated with the Tannery complex at the end of Pages Road but for many years has been associated with the late Victorian house situated at the corner of Wilson Road known as Margaret Farm. The main house with a street address of 52 Wilson Road is associated with the barn and is prominently sited on an important intersection. The house (c.1887 or c.1897) has been substantially altered around the 1950s but retains some original features.

The following decscription is wholly derived from the Conservation Management Plan prepared by Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, January 1993. A detailed site inspection was not undertaken by Paul Davies Pty Ltd as a result of the the building being presently boarded up and fenced off.

Footings: No excavations were made-but it is assumed that the building is supported off mass footings constructed of hand-made bricks laid in lime mortar and that these have a foundation in the clay soil.

Damp Proof Course: A heavy galvanised iron DPC has been built into the base of the building extending through the wall and extending around the whole perimeter of the walls. The DPC has obviously deteriorated in several sections allowing moisture to rise in the walls and erode the mortar and brickwork. There is no obvious perimeter sub-surface drainage system.

Main Walls: The main structure of the building consists of walls construction of salmon coloured hand-made bricks laid with lime mortar in English bond to a total thickness of 350mm. Evidence of tuck pointing remains on portions of the walls indicating that the building originally was of high quality considering its size and location and function.

The walls reduce in thickness to 230mm above the first floor wall plate level and to 110mm above the roof plate level. The roof plate returns at the east and west gables where it is embedded as a ground in the wall.

Roof Structure: The roof is pitched at 45degrees and is simply framed with 100 x 70mm hardwood rafters at 46degrees centres fixed at a ridge beam and 95 x 45 hardwood collar ties to each rafter at the mid span.

The rafters are birdsmouthed over the 120 x 75 roof plate and are battened with 65 x 20mm hardwood battens at 155mm centres for She Oak shingles which remain under later corrugated iron sheeting.

There is a very small eaves projection and the gable ends are finished off with decorative, scalloped profiled, barge boards. There is evidence of a central timber finial at each end of the roof, a common decorative device used in the 1860 and 70s.

Guttering: There is no guttering at present but grounds in the wall and the remains of an elaborate rain waterhead on the north face of the barn and downpipe brackets on the south face suggest that gutters were originally fitted.

Ground Floor: The ground floor level of the barn is paved with loose laid, handmade bricks with some areas laid on edge and some on flat. An original timber dividing screen wall is evidenced at floor level by the floor plate. Evidence of previous post supports and timber divisions are evidenced in the floor. Several latter machine mounting blocks are also built into the floor.

Loft Floor: The intermediate floor structure consists of herringbone braced 230 x 90mm hardwood joists at approximately 550mm centres with 25mm mixed species flooring boards of various width. A number of penetrations have been made through the floor possibly for ladder access. The floor contains evidence of previous post supports and timber dividing walls and is presently supported on temporary props.

Cow Bails: The later cow bails on the south of the brick structure are constructed as a vernacular braced timber frame clad and roofed in corrugated iron with some slab partitioning and later diagonal boarded stable doors and gates.

The paving is unreinforced concrete laid over original brick paving.

The bails contain two horse troughs possibly reused from inside the stable and has two purpose-made galvanised ventilation openings.

Some remaining evidence of earlier structures built against the south wall of the Barn can be discerned.

Internal Finish: The walls internally are face brickwork lime washed in several layers of varying colours. Evidence of milk tallies pencilled onto the walls indicates possible dairy use in more recent times.

The ground floor space has several areas where timber plates are built into the wall and have previously housed racks or bails or stall divisions evidenced by the outline of missing timbers. Two keeping holes for grooming equipment are located in the west wall. Two vent holes in the south walls have galvanised trims.

Windows & Doors:

North Elevation:

W1: Rectangular timber framed window (no sashes, sills missing) with red rubbing voussoirs. Fitted with vertical steel bars.

W2: As for W1, fitted with vertical steel bars. Note: The sills were originally rendered in imitation of sandstone.

D1: Timber framed ledged and braced door with beaded tongue and groove lining externally. Head supported with timber lintel. Externally red rubbing voussoirs.

West Elevation:

W3: Rectangular timber framed window opening, sills and head missing frame deteriorated.

D2: Loft door timber framed and ledged door with tongue and groove lining externally (much deteriorated). Red rubbing voussoirs externally.

V1: Small circular vent with red rubbing brick surround - no obvious timber louvre frame. Brick surround damaged.

South Elevation:

V2 & 3: Two small galvanised circular wall vents built into the wall face - original function unknown.

D3: Timber framed and ledged door - not original.

East Elevation:

W4: Rectangular timber framed windows, no sashes, sills missing. Red rubbing voussoirs.

The window and door frames are halved and pegged and were originally painted. No evidence of sashes or shutters remain. The original doors have hand forged strap hinges and a set of large hand forged gate hinges survive in the building.

The building is in generally poor condition. The building structure shows marked deterioration and there has been extensive white ant damage to the loft floor structure. Removal of a section of the roof has further contributed to deterioration

The following physical condition is wholly derived from the Conservation Management Plan prepared by Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, January 1993.

Damage to the building is largely the result of structural failure; rising damp; weather penetration at roof level; weather penetration to windows and sills; borer and white ant attack; lack of regular painting of external joinery.

The barn structure requires extensive remedial structural work to ensure its continued existence.

The Cow Bails appear to have been reconstructed using both new and old materials and whilst vernacular in detail are generally sound. According to the Conservation Management Plan prepared by Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, January 1993 the building structure showed marked deterioration due to the thrust of the roof spreading the upper walls, additionally extensive white ant damage to the loft floor structure and possible overloading of the structure has led to failure in the floor joists. Removal of a section of the roof has contributed to deterioration of the building at the west end and resulted in timber rot and further brickwork damage. Rising damp had resulted from the failure of the original damp proof course and to the fact that soil had built up against the walls of the Barn externally. No investigation of the footings was made nor soil testing in 1993. It was assumed that, based on an inspection in 1993 of the rest of the building at this time, the footings were adequate and that there were no substantial subsoil problems which would effect the long term stability of the structure.

Detailed inspection of the cracking and distortion of the walls in 1993 indicated that the spread of the upper section of the walls was due to the roof load whilst cracking and missing brickwork on the eastern and western gable walls was identified as resulting from the large openings effectively weakening the wall structure. Timber members embedded in the wall fabric for its whole length at wall plate level had effectively reduced the wall cross section by half.

Extensive weathering of the wall surface removed most of the protective tuck pointing and attacked the soft lime mortar joints.

The loss of mortar in the walls from ground to sill height was as a result of rising damp penetrating the original damp proof course. In some sections of the building, the outside ground level is above the damp course allowing direct water penetration into the walls.

The loss of brickwork above openings in the eastern and western gable walls appears to be due to the wall displacement and subsequent rotation of the supporting frames and lintels.

The damage to the sills could be due to the action of water penetration through the top coat of render, as the brick on edge sills were not restrained in any way.

Roof Structure: The rafters of the barn had a noticeable bow in the order of 50mm between the ridge and wall plates and consequential spreading of the ends. The collar ties have effectively restrained the roof at mid rafter level only and the bending in the rafters has resulted.

This action has pushed the wall plates and resulted in movement at the top of the walls.

The original shingled covering appears to be in very good condition where it has been protected by the latter galvanised sheeting.

The area of the roof which is missing its sheeting had deteriorated significantly with brown rot being observed in the north western corner of the roof. Weather penetration at this point has rotted completely the original shingle roofing.

The corrugated iron roofing appears sound though exhibiting surface rusting. The rolled galvanised ridge capping is badly damaged at the western end.

The ends of the corrugated roofing project significantly past the original shingle line requiring any guttering that is installed to be blocked off the wall to be effective in collecting storm water runoff.

The original scalloped barge boards are heavily weathered and, in some portions, severely damaged. Any barge moulding which may have existed has since fallen away and the original decorative gable finials are both missing.

Ground Floor: The brick paving is in good condition suggesting that the site is not affected by excessively high water table movements.

Loft Floor: The loft floor joists which span from north to south have been extensively damaged by termite attack with total failure of the joists in the eastern half of the building and partial failure of the remainder. The joists are incapable of carrying the load from the loft and temporary props have been installed in the eastern half of the building.

The joists have also undergone local damage by borer attack and the herring bone strutting has many missing members. Access openings in the floor have not been adequately trimmed between the joists.

The flooring of the loft which consists of mixed hardwood and softwood material of varying widths has been extensively damaged by both termites and borers making the loft unsafe for use.

Cow Balls: The vernacular structure of the cow bails appears to have been extensively rebuilt in recent times reusing original members and incorporating new materials. Where supporting posts have been embedded in the ground, their bases have extensively rotted and there is evidence of some termite activity. However, generally the posts are sound and can be repaired. The roof framing is light by modern standards and the roof sheeting is insecurely fixed.

The flooring of the bails was originally brick paved and has been topped with cement over much of the area.

Windows & Doors: The windows and door joinery is in very poor condition with rotted joints and missing sections of timber which has been made worse by the deterioration of the rendered sills and the absence of sashes or shutters in the openings.

Modifications And Dates

The available evidence suggests that the Barn was originally purpose-built to house horses and continued in its original form through much of the 19th Century in association with the main house attached to the Colonial Tannery Works. The quantity of construction and detailing of the remaining structure suggests that an architect or master builder/designer was involved in its construction. Later internal alterations appear to have been made to allow the space to be used for storage or manufacturing processes, with the lean-to addition being made possibly to shelter animals or for additional storage. In the early part of the 20th Century, the Barn may have been used to house several machines or generators as well as being a dairy. The present state of deterioration suggests that for many years the Barn has been used for storage, with the lean-to and corrals housing cattle or sheep. The Barn would appear to be one of the oldest industrial use buildings in the St Marys area.

A 1883 plan provides the first and only detailed evidence of the extent and configuration of the tannery as it had evolved. It clearly indicates that the 'Barn', marked 'Stables' on the plan, was in existence by this time although the house at the corner of Wilson and Pages Road was not yet built. A small cottage in Pages Road, one of three original cottages, now derelict and in ruins, was also in existence at this time and was probably used to house workers associated with the Tannery. The area at the end of Pages Road and south of the large dam formed a courtyard of buildings which seem to be associated with the main house as they are set out at right angles to each other. As the cottage in Pages Road is of similar construction to the barn, it is assumed that the group of eight buildings may have all been designed as a unit by one designer. The most likely period for the construction of these buildings is the late 1860s when the site was developed into one of the largest tanneries in the Colony by Robert Saddington.

Further Comments

Some disturbance to archaeological evidence may have occurred through the activities of the twentieth century market gardening. There is also evidence of a dam that existed prior to 1883 partially contained within the study area. The potential for any evidence of a brick-yard on this site cannot be determined because of the lack of documentary evidence.

Current Use

Former Use

tannery

Listings

Listings

Records Retrieved: 3					
Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number	Gazette Date	Gazette Number	Gazette Page
Local Environmental Plan	Penrith Local Environmental Plan 2010	226	9/22/2010 12:00:00 AM		
Heritage study	House Barn & Tannery Site	SM-26	4/1/1987 12:00:00 AM		20/12/1991
Heritage study		2260226	11/1/2007 12:00:00 AM		

Procedures/Exemptions

Records Retrieved: 0					
Section of Act	Description	Title	Comments	Action Date	Outcome
No Results Found					

History

In 1806 Mary Putland, daughter of Governor Bligh, was granted 242 hectares by Governor King in the district that would become known as St Marys. The estate was named "Frogmore". After the death of her first husband, Mary Putland remarried to Maurice O'Connell. In 1810 Governor Macquarie enlarged their Frogmore Estate by an additional grant of 426 hectares. There is no evidence to suggest that any part of the study area, although contained within the estate, was developed as part of it. In 1841 part of this property, known under the combined name of the O'Connell Estates were subdivided into thirty-five town allotments. These the earliest subdivisions in the area, were offered for sale as the village of St Marys. Approximately 400 hectares of the O'Connell Estates had been divided into allotments by 1842 as well as twenty-four single hectare paddocks. The sale of the land was slow; only sixteen hectares had been sold by 1855. By this time St Marys had been established as a small roadside village which included a few houses and shops, a post office, hotel and at least two tanneries. Development focussed on the Great Western Highway. There remains no evidence to suggest that the study area was developed or utilised in any way as part of this early urban growth. The Tannery site portion of the O'Connell grant remained undeveloped and possibly unoccupied except for stock paddocks between 1806-1856 .

In 1855, a mortgage sale of the unsold portions of the O'Connell St Marys Estates was held and was purchased and immediately remarketed for sale by Andrew Hardie McCulloch. In January 1856, Lots 1-3, 16, 18 and 40 of the O'Connell Estate were purchased by John Page for 1,536 pounds. This property occupied the whole of the land known as the "Fattening Paddock" which stretched back to the Marsden property of "Mamre". Lots 1,2 and 3 were developed as a Tannery with the main establishment being on the bank of the creek. The precise extent, disposition and nature of the works associated with the tannery is unknown although certain expectations could be held based on the known requirements of a tannery of the period. The tannery is not shown on the Reuss and Browne survey of the town in c.1855. This plan also demonstrates that both Pages Road and Wilson Street had not been formed by this date .

In February 1866 Page was forced to sell the Tannery to Robert Saddington when he failed to meet his mortgage. The fortunes of the tannery improved greatly under the new ownership and in 1870 the tannery of 'Saddington and Sons at South Creek' was described as one of the most extensive establishments of the kind in the Colony. It employed 48 hands and produced an average of about 350 hides per week . Saddington's works were named the 'Colonial Tannery', but within the town they were commonly referred to as 'the big tannery'. It is clear that Saddington either subsumed or added extensively to the pre-existing facilities. In doing so it is possible that he moved the focus of his works away from the creek although still retaining the association; tanneries required large quantities of water for their processing. In September 1879 the site, encompassing approximately ninety-two hectares (Lots 1-3) of the O'Connell Estates, was sold to Thomas Alcock and Joseph Davenport, Tanners & Curriers, who operated the Tannery until drought forced the closure of works and the eventual failure of the business .

John White bought the Tannery in 1882 who is said to have made great improvements to the business although what these works entailed is no longer clear. At the time the tannery site covered approximately 77 hectares. The site was sold within a year to Francis McNab due to insolvency. The site changed hands immediately to Frederick Wilson, a bank manager who subdivided part of the land as township blocks and retained the Tannery site on a portion of 13 hectares. The subdivision plan for this sale gives the only accurate evidence for the layout of the Tannery. It shows that the barn (marked stables) was in existence by this time although the house on the corner of Wilson and Pages Road was not yet built. Between that site and the barn were two substantial buildings fenced around; their functions are unknown. Three small buildings were located along the opposite side of Pages Road. Beyond the barn/stables was a very large dam and around this and to the creek were the extensive industrial buildings and pits. Both Pages Road and Wilson Street had been formed by 1883. The tannery was retained as Section C of the subdivision comprising approximately thirteen hectares. From 1884-1888 the site appears to have been leased to tanners, prior to this it had lain idle. Firstly Mr Hasfall and then Mr Farrell leased the site, the latter is thought to have built the single –storey Italianate house on the corner of Wilson Street .

In 1888 part of the estate was sold, including the Tannery site, to Frederick Clissold, a gentleman from Ashfield, and, on his death, passed to his wife and various others. The site appears to have lain idle between 1888 and the mid 1890s when the tanning works were revived under a new manager, Mr Armstrong in 1894. The new works were known as the "Colonial Tannery" with approximately twenty men and boys employed at the business. In 1897 much of the equipment and a large three storey building were destroyed by fire but work recommenced shortly after and tanning continued at the site until 1901 when the Colonial Tannery moved its operations to Botany to reduce freight charges for transport of hides. Joseph and Lewis Anschau of Luddenham, Tanners and Bootmakers, bought the site in 1901 and re-established it as the Colonial Tannery of Anschau and Sons, Tanners and Blucher Manufacturers commencing production of shoe leather and blucher boots at the site with much of the surrounding farm under cultivation for hay. Anschau's Tannery was one of three major tanneries in operation in 1907, employing 14 hands and treating 100 hides per week as well as producing a large quantity of bluchers - ie. 2,589 pairs in the first quarter of 1905. The facilities at the site were described as a brick structure of roomy proportions (the factory); an eighteen horse power boiler, eight horse power engine, two rollers, a bark mill and several pumps. The bark mill was usually either water powered or steam driven and turned grinding stones to crush the wattle bark which produced essential liquor used in the tanning process. Water for the site came from the creek via a windmill and went directly to the pits. These pits were arranged, contrary to normal practice, in a circle. The pits shown on the 1883 plan were not in a circular pattern.

In 1911 the site was sold to Patrick Meare, a farmer, and the tanning work ceased production. The site became a mixed working farm, known as "Margaret Farm" with the late Victorian house at the corner of Wilson Street acting as the homestead. Over time, all of the original buildings except the stables and a small cottage in Pages Road, were demolished. It appears to have been used at least for some time as a market garden after the demolition of the buildings. The site was subdivided for suburban housing in the inter-war and post-war periods, further reducing the original curtilage of the Tannery . In 1991 the land was sold to the NSW Government Department of Planning. In 2001 the site was leased to Planetary Naturals Pty Ltd and was in a hold-over arrangement. The lease returned \$13,650.00 per annum, not including the barn

The following historical information has been sourced directly from the Penrith City Council Website and is useful in providing a overall background history of the Tanning Industry in the St Marys District which includes Margaret Farm and Barn, which was formerly part of Pages Tannery, and the subject of this report.

History of Tanning Tradition

Tanning is one of the oldest colonial industries with the earliest known tanner in the country operating in Sydney from 1803. From 1830 until 1848 there were approximately five to seven tanneries operating in Sydney, approximately six at Windsor and possibly another four at Parramatta. Campbelltown, Liverpool, Maitland and Bathurst all had two or more. In 1848 legislation was enacted which provided for the removal of noxious industries, including tanneries, outside city limits. This led to the establishment of tanneries at places such as Botany, Willoughby and Auburn. By the late 1880s a number of tanneries were extremely large and older technology was replaced by mechanisation. Some nineteenth century tanneries still operated within the metropolitan area until very recent times. There is little or no evidence available at this time with respect to the development of the bootmaking industry in the colony. (Penrith City Council Website)

Tanning Industry in the St Marys District

Little information is available about the development of St Marys' tanning and bootmaking industries prior to the commencement of the local paper, the Nepean Times (NT), in the early 1880s. However, from the available documentary evidence it appears that tanning was the first industry to be established in St Marys, taking advantage of the ready supply of water (from both the creek and nearby springs), the availability of hides through the local cattle industry and the local supply of suitable tanning bark. While it was claimed in 1884 that "at one time" there were no less than twelve tanneries, large and small, in full swing, no documentary evidence has been found to identify or locate most of these, the majority of which would have been small, one-man or family operations. However, local sources, which are largely based on oral history, have identified at least four sites which are believed to have been operating as tanneries by the 1850s. In reminiscences relating to the village in the 1850s two of these were described as follows: "Next to Spratbrow" (who had a small slab shop on the south-western corner of the Western Road and Mamre Road) "was the residence of Tom Paskin (sic), who had a saddlers shop and tan yard". From the present site of Victoria Park "right back to Mamre, stretched the 'Fattening Paddock' ... (which)... belonged to Mr Page, who had the first tannery here, which was situated on the bank of the creek". Of the above, Paskin's tannery is reputed to have been established in the early 1840s, while the Land Titles Office (LTO) records show that Page purchased his tannery site in January 1856. The other tanneries believed to have been established by this time were those of Samuel Thompson and Thomas Harford. The former was located on the eastern bank of South Creek, facing the Western Road, and according to family history it started in 1850 with only six pits and seven hides. In 1853 land was purchased a little further to the west by Thomas Harford. This site was developed as Harford's Tannery and Boot Making Factory and in 1887 was described as the oldest tannery in the district. As Paskin's tannery was still operating at this time, but under different ownership, this may mean that Harford's had remained under the one ownership for the longest time; that Harford was leasing his tannery site prior to purchasing it in 1853; or that Paskin's tannery was not established as early as suggested in some local records. Despite the apparent suitability of the area to the establishment of tanneries their 'success was by no means guaranteed, and by the beginning of 1866 John Page's Saylhurst Tannery had been sold to Robert Saddington following the closure of the mortgage. However, the fortunes of the tannery improved greatly under the new ownership and in 1870 the tannery of 'Saddington and Sons at South Creek' was described as one of the most extensive establishments of the kind in the Colony. It employed 48 hands and produced an average of about 350 hides per week. Saddington's works were named the 'Colonial Tannery', but within the town they were commonly referred to as 'the big tannery' (Penrith City Council Website).

The Growth of the Industry

In 1872 Saddington was one of only five tanners listed for St Marys in the Post Office Directory. The others were Thomas Harford, Daniel Lord, Thomas Paskin and Matthew Webb & Sons. However, over the next few years there was considerable activity which was reflected in changes in ownership and in the establishment of new works. The purchase of a small tannery by Martin Brell in 1879 and the establishment of new works by Andrew Thompson (the son of Samuel Thompson) in 1881 were of particular note as these were to become the two largest tanneries in the district. Within one year of opening his new works in Saddington Street Andrew Thompson had increased the number of pits on his site from 10 to 128 and was employing 25 men. In addition to the above the 'Parkhill Tannery' was opened in the vicinity of the present day Desborough Road by Mr. R. Hamilton (c.1874); a large, new site was purchased on the western side of the Windsor Road (Queen Street) by Matthew Webb (1876); Saddington's tannery was sold to Thomas Henry Alcock and Joseph Davenport (1879); and Thomas Paskin's tannery was sold to John Herford (c.1882). (Penrith City Council Website)

Variable Fortunes

From the 1880s the major events in the history of the tanneries of St Marys were well documented in the Nepean Times and it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of their role within the town. The insecurity of employment associated with the tanning industry during this period must have been a major factor in the development of St Marys. Frequent references were made in the Nepean Times to the difficulties associated with drought (insufficient water), wet weather (inability to dry the hides), the destruction of the tanneries by fire, and the vagaries of the market (ie. the periodic conjunction of a high price for bark and/or hides and a low price for leather). Mismanagement was cited as a problem on at least one occasion. Despite the excellent supply of water from the creek and underground springs drought was still a major problem in the operation of the tanneries, large amounts of fresh water being required for the various stages of the tanning process. In May 1882 this was reported as being a major factor in the closure of St Marys "centre piece of industry", Mr Alcock's tanyard. A "considerable number" of people lost their jobs and most of these were forced to go elsewhere to seek work. In October of that year the tannery was sold to Ebenezer John White, but despite (or perhaps because of) the "great improvements" which he made to the tannery, White became insolvent in just over a year and was forced to sell. From this time the tannery appears to have remained largely idle until the beginning of 1887. The mid-1880s appear to have been difficult times and at least two other tanneries changed hands during this period - both apparently due to financial difficulties. In 1886 Webb's tannery was offered for sale as Section I of a subdivision of the site, but was not sold until 1891. The management of the tannery was taken over by a Mr Forsyth, but by 1888 various other allotments within the subdivision were being sold by W.C. Hill and W. Clark, as mortgagees exercising the right of sale. At the same

time Thomas Harford sold his tannery site to John Harris of Shane Park for- 1000 pounds, but he obviously had no intention of leaving the town or changing his line of business, because he continued to manage the works as a family concern until the mid-1890s . However, despite these 'bad times' many of the tanners of St Marys managed to survive and some seem to have thrived.In February 1887 it was reported that the "... tanning industries at St Marys are now looking up immense. There are now seven yards doing a fair amount of work. Altogether these employ between 50 and 60 hands, and will very soon increase this number" . The seven tanneries noted in that article where those run by W. Carberry (the manager of Harford's Tannery and Boot Making Factory and the largest employer at that time), Martin Brell (Brell's tannery), Mr Farrell (the manager of Wilson's tannery - originally Page's), Mr Forsyth (the manager of Webb's tannery), Robert Hamilton (Parkhill Tannery), John Herford (Herford s tannery - originally Paskin's) and Andrew Thompson (St Marys Tannery) (Penrith City Council Website).

Consolidation of the Tanning Industry

By 1890 there were eight tanneries operating at St Marys, but in the following year Mr. Herford's business had grown to such an extent that he took up new premises on Eastern Creek. Some of his equipment was transferred to another local tannery and his St Marys yard ceased to operate . One of the only new tanneries to be established during the last few years of the century was that of Robert Desborough who had opened his yard on Phillip Street (near the south-western corner of the present-day Desborough and Bega Streets) by April 1895 .However, this did not mean that the tanning industry was entering a period of decline, but rather a period of consolidation. During the 1890s the established tanners spent considerable money on upgrading and expanding their works and on adopting new technology. In 1891 Webb's yard was sold to Andrew Thompson who subsequently developed it as his 'No 2 Tannery' , and by 1895 Thompson was reported as making "great additions to both of his tannery yards". New buildings were being erected under the supervision of an architect, 25 additional pits were put down in the old yard and 9 or 10 in the new yard. At the same time Desborough and Hamilton were reported as having introduced steam to their works . Later in the same year Harford's tannery was sold by the administrators of John Harris' Estate to Martin Brell, who had owned the adjoining tannery since 1879. He subsequently upgraded and combined the two works and in 1897 purchased additional land to the rear of his property to further enlarge the yard .??Despite the great improvements to St Marys tanneries the weather and fire were still major threats to the industry and in April 1897 it was reported that some of the local tanneries were again being threatened with closure because of another extended drought . Later in the same month six thousand pounds worth of property was destroyed by a fire at the Colonial Tannery (the site originally established by Page in the 1850s) , and two years later eight thousand pounds worth of damage was done by a fire at Thompson's No. 1 tannery . However, the response to these disasters was immediate and both fires were followed by major rebuilding programmes . By 1906 the industries of St Marys included four tanneries which were operated by Messrs Andrew Thompson, Martin Brell, Robert Desborough, and J. L. Anschau & Sons. The latter were the only new tanners to move to St Marys in the early 1900s, having taken over the Colonial Tannery in 1902 and re-established it as the Colonial Tannery of Anschau and Sons, Tanners and Blucher Manufacturers . During the first decade of the twentieth century these four yards appear to have provided steady employment for about 60 men.In 1907 the three major tanneries were Thompson's (which employed 26 hands and treated an average of 520 hides per week), Brell's (which employed 15 hands and treated an average of 450 hides per week) and Anschau's (which employed 14 hands and treated 100 hides per week as well as producing a large quantity of bluchers - ie. 2,589 pairs in the first quarter of 1905). The main drawback connected with leather manufacturing at St Marys at this time was attributed to the heavy charges which tanneries had to pay in railage and cartage, both in obtaining tanning supplies from Sydney, and forwarding the finished article to the capital. The railway rate on bark railed from Sydney to St Marys was 3s 5p per ton for large quantities and 4s 8p for smaller consignments. To that had to be added the cost of cartage (2s 6p per ton) from the stores in Sydney to the railway station.

The Closure of the Major Tanneries

The first of the major tanneries to close down was Anschau's Colonial Tannery which was sold in 1911 and apparently no longer used . In about 1915 this was followed by St Marys Tannery which closed with the retirement of Andrew Thompson (34) Both Desborough and Brell were still operating their yards in 1930, but Brell's tannery closed after his death on 17 January 1934, and Desborough's followed sometime during that decade. By the beginning of the Second World War the only tanneries operating in the district were those at nearby Werrington and Kingswood (Penrith City Council Website).

Historic Themes

Records Retrieved: 2

National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
4. Settlement	Towns, suburbs and villages	Rural settlement
3. Economy	Industry	Industrial Development

Recommended Management

Management Summary

Remedial action is needed to stabilise the building. A full pest inspection should be carried out to determine the current extent of termite activity in the structure and surrounding site.

The Conservation Management Plan for Margaret Barn should be reviewed and updated as it over 14 years old and needs to be brought in line with current Heritage Office requirements for such documents. The Conservation Management Plan should be extended to include an assessment of the house and include a curtilage analysis that encompasses the house and barn. Essential works and maintenance to the house and barn and surrounding land should be undertaken in accordance with a Schedule of Works and Maintenance Schedule that should be included in the CMP.

The Conservation Management Plan should investigate the opportunity to adaptively reuse the property for a range of uses including an artist working studio. It should also investigate the potential to rezone the land and dispose of it as part of the South Creek Corridor review.

The Department of Planning could explore the opportunity to offer the property to the market via an Expression of Interest process. Failing that should the land not be able to be subdivided/rezoned and sold then negotiations should be pursued directly with the Ministry for the Arts who have expressed interest in the property as an art space in accordance with the Western Sydney Arts Policy.

An Excavation Permit should be obtained prior to the commencement of any work which disturbs the surface of the ground within the site.

Archaeological work which is carried out under this permit, except in areas of identifiable and specific evidence of past occupation, should monitor any excavations which may reveal undocumented evidence of past uses and management of the site.

A preliminary archaeological investigation be carried out in the event of disturbance of those portions of the site which are identified as containing potentially intact archaeological evidence of specific structures and features, to establish the extent, nature and integrity of the resource.

Management

Records Retrieved: 2

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

Report/Study

Heritage Studies

Records Retrieved: 5

Report/Study Name	Report/Study Code	Report/Study Type	Report/Study Year	Organisation	Author
Penrith Heritage Study Review			2005		Paul Davies Pty Ltd
Penrith Heritage Study Review			2005		Pail Davies Pty Ltd
Penrith Heritage Study Review			2005		Paul Davies Pty. Ltd.
Penrith Heritage Study Review			2005		Paul Davies Pty. Ltd.
Department of Urban Affairs and Planning			2000		S.170

Reference & Internet Links

References

Records Retrieved: 6

Type	Author	Year	Title	Link
Written	Paul Davies Pty Ltd	1999	s.170 Register DUAP	
Written	Paul Davies Pty Ltd	1999	s.170 Register DUAP	
Written	Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners	1993	The Barn, Margaret Farm - Pages Road St Marys NSW: Conservation Plan	
Written	Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners	1993	The Barn, Margaret Farm - Pages Road St Marys NSW: Conservation Plan	
Written	Stapleton, L & E.		Stapleton Collection c 1975-1990	
Written	Stapleton, L & E.		Stapleton Collection c 1975-1990	

Data Source

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Data Source	Record Owner	Heritage Item ID
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